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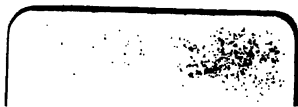
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**FROM POVERTY TO WEALTH.**





# FROM POVERTY TO WEALTH.

*A Novel.*

BY

WM. THEODORE HICKMAN.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.



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# FROM POVERTY TO WEALTH.

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## CHAPTER I.

PAUL LOREAYNE, THE PATENTEE.

A MAN who hits upon what he believes to be a most important invention will naturally protect himself by a patent; but if he happens to be a person of small means, he must be bold if he elects to risk his money by the working of that patent.

If he does so, he will probably think that he is working on a certainty; but in that case his knowledge of the world must be but slender. A man who knows the world knows this—that “certainties” come off but very seldom; and, with

regard to patents, that this is especially so. True; a patentee must know but little if he has not heard or read how inventors have gone to the wall, whilst persons with money, but without inventive faculties, have reaped the benefit of their ingenuity. But it is probably the case that each inventor looks upon himself as an exception; that although others may have foolishly frittered away their time and money upon patents, they were fools who took too sanguine a view of things, and deserved their fate, but that for themselves success is as a matter of course. In this way failures are multiplied, and clever men reap but little benefit.

Paul Lorrayne—one of the principal persons in this narrative—was a patentee; and the nature of his invention was bricks. His father, now dead, was the second son of a good old family in Gloucestershire, who had for many generations been large landowners; and he had been the means of putting bricks into his son's head. Possessed of a considerable patrimony, he had spent a portion



of it, and then, wishing to double the remainder, he had bought a brickfield and made bricks.

The result was, as might have been expected, that instead of doubling his remaining money, it became "beautifully less;" so that when he died, his son, after disposing of the brickfield, and the plant which belonged to it, was possessed of but eight hundred pounds.

But the father had not done so badly as some have done. He had had good times and bad times; but, instead of saving during the good times, had spent his money freely, and so was obliged to use his capital when the bad times came. In addition, however, to losing his money by bricks and extravagance combined, the father had succeeded in giving his only son a love for bricks, who conceived an idea, which he thought was very brilliant, for making them in a way which no one else had ever tried; namely, by hot-air blast. Paul Lorrayne had mentioned his idea to his father, but the parent, who was a mixture of sense and folly like most people, scouted the plan

as utterly impracticable, and adhered to the old-fashioned way. When he died, the son, as has been said, realised his interest in the brickfield, and then took out a patent for his invention, and proceeded to work it. In the first place, he thought a public company would be the best for carrying out his plan, and he did his best to float one. He applied to scientific men and practical engineers for their opinion, and nearly all wrote him highly complimentary letters, to the effect that the thing must succeed, and only wanted trying and the outlay of a moderate sum to make success at once certain. Whether Paul Lorrayne paid anything for these valuable letters, or whether the men who wrote them merely did so from the kindness of their natures, will never be known perhaps; but it is quite certain that, when pressed by the patentee to take shares in a company and pay for them, they one and all declined to do so. They had no objection to their letters being used, but put their hands into their pockets they would not. It was something, however, to get the letters

and armed with them Paul Lorrayne spent a good deal of time in calling upon persons, and trying to induce them to take a moneyed interest in his scheme. Now and then he came across persons who liked the idea very much, and who were quite willing to take shares in a company and to get their friends to do so, but these persons always turned out to have no money and no friends who were worth anything; so that his time was lost, and the hope of a company gradually diminished.

But although this was so, he could work his patent himself; and that is what he elected to do. He estimated that for three hundred pounds he could build a kiln with the necessary hot-air courses and shafts, and provide himself with all the machinery he wanted; and so sanguine was he that he pitied the poor foolish people who had declined his offers to share in the undertaking, and set to work with the expectation of immediate success.

He knew that if he failed he should be ruined

so far as his capital was concerned; but ruin was out of the question—the kiln must succeed, and then eight hundred pounds would be as a drop in the ocean. He should simply make money as fast as he liked, or perhaps faster. He had another motive, too, for rushing into riches. He wished to marry, and to lose no time about it; for a very charming girl was willing to unite her fortune—or her want of it, for she had nothing—to his own, and to share his future wealth. Certain as Paul Lorraine was of his success, he felt that, to say the least, it would be more businesslike to wait until it actually came before he married; but the thing was so sure that it would save time to get the marriage over at once, so that when he should be busy selling royalties and building houses, he might not have the trouble of going through the ceremony.

The girl he wished to marry thought much as he did as to the folly of delay, if he was so certain to succeed; and yet she had some worldly prudence. Minnie Moreton was the only daughter

of a stockbroker who had made fortunes and lost them alternately, until at last he had died without a sixpence; and she had since lived with a relative who had not taken the charge of her very willingly.

Perhaps this circumstance caused her to look more favourably on her lover's scheme than she might otherwise have done; but however that may be, she consented to marry him, and they were married accordingly. If the truth were known, the young wife would rather that her husband had chosen any other occupation than making bricks, and that his invention had been for anything rather than increasing them at cheaper rates than heretofore; but since it was to be so, she endeavoured to interest herself in his pursuits, although with indifferent success.

As soon as the marriage was over, Paul Lorrayne set to work in earnest. He bought a plot of ground containing brick-earth near Turnham Green, and here he built his kiln and put up his machinery, living in a small house close

by. He had wished to take a rather better house, feeling that in a very few weeks money would be no object; but his wife, mindful of her father's repeated failures, had advised a small one, and her advice had been taken.

Before commencing his project, Paul Lorrayne had written to his uncle in Gloucestershire, who owned the family estate, to offer him a share in the undertaking, and to ask for his support; but the reply had been most unsatisfactory to him.

It was to the effect that if his nephew embarked in such an absurd undertaking as making bricks except in the usual way, he, as his uncle, would be under the unpleasant necessity of cutting all connection with him, and refusing any assistance either present or in the future. This determination on the uncle's part had given the nephew little uneasiness; but the young wife had been much pained by it. She had so often heard her father speak of certainties which turned out worthless, that she would have liked dearly to have rich and influential

relatives to fall back upon if the patent brick-kiln should deceive them.

So strong was her feeling upon this point, that notwithstanding the uncle's almost violent refusal to countenance the patent in any way whatever, she induced her husband to write again, only to meet with a still more stern refusal. There was evidently nothing to hope from the uncle's assistance, and so Paul Lorrayne set about his undertaking with all his energy.

It took a longer time than the designer had anticipated to erect the kiln and bring the machinery to bear; but it was finished at last, although at an increased expenditure; and then the important question was asked whether it would produce bricks made serviceable by hot-air blast, or whether it would refuse to do so and burst.

Unfortunately the latter was the case. Whether the pressure of hot air within the pipes and courses was too great, or whether they were wrongly constructed and not of sufficient strength or size, is uncertain, but the result was the same; a general

destruction took place, and more expense was incurred. Paul Lorryne himself, although grievously disappointed, was by no means disheartened. He saw the cause of failure, and wondered he had not prepared for it; but his wife was much disturbed.

What if the second attempt should fail? Already half their capital had been expended, and they seemed farther from success than when they started; at least to her it seemed so. If the remaining four hundred pounds should gradually diminish in mending and improving the kiln and machinery, what were they to do? Although she said nothing to discourage her sanguine husband, and like a good wife did her utmost to keep his spirits up, she was inclined to think that the workhouse would more probably be their home than the stately mansion he had so often talked of. With these sentiments, she induced him to be as careful as possible, and to spend as little on the kiln as was compatible with the ultimate chances of success; but the necessary repairs were expensive, and their money lessened unpleasantly.



Time passed on, and then a second attempt was made, with no better result than before. This time, although there was no bursting, there was an insufficient application of hot air, and the bricks, far from becoming hard and useful throughout, remained uncomfortably soft in some parts, while in others they were done, as it were, too much.

Although a second failure stared him in the face, Paul Lorrayne lost nothing of his confidence ; but he did begin to think his money might be spent before he hit off the exact amount of hot-air blast required and the necessary strength wanted by the kiln.

The mansion loomed still farther in the distance ; and so far from taking a larger house, they left the one they occupied for another which was smaller. The new house was at Hatford, which was farther from town than Turnham Green, and the rent and taxes were lower ; but still Mrs. Paul Lorrayne felt certain that they should have to diminish their expenses still more, unless her husband cast aside

his patent brick-kiln and endeavoured to earn his bread by some other means.

In their new abode at Hatford, the young wife did her best to earn a few pounds by teaching music and drawing; and in this way she was enabled to provide for their plain living, and enable her husband to spend the remainder of his little capital on his patent. She was so good and true that no word of impatience escaped her, as she saw him month after month, and at length year after year, wasting his time on what she was fully persuaded would never turn out good for anything.

During the time they lived at Hatford two children were born to them, and then they felt their poverty to press very hard upon them.

As to Paul Lorrayne, he would gladly have put aside the working of his patent, and tried to earn his bread by surer means if he could have done so; but for the last few years he had been so absorbed by his invention, and the working it, that to the general world he was almost lost. He had no friends to whom he could apply, except his uncle

in Gloucestershire, and he could get no help from him. Latterly indeed he had written to this relative for assistance several times, but the reply had always been the same: that he had chosen to throw his time and money away on a stupid new-fangled attempt at making bricks, and had done so contrary to the best advice, and that now he must take the consequences.

There is perhaps nothing more unpleasant than for a man who has worked hard, and with a *bonâ-fide* belief in his ultimate success, to be told that he ought to have done something quite different—that he has only himself to blame. It is so easy for stupid people to point to the blunders which clever ones have made, and give them advice as to the course they should pursue, that stupid people and others, when they have the opportunity, find it very hard to resist the temptation. Paul Lorrayne's uncle in Gloucestershire was not a stupid man, but his determination and obstinacy were very great.

He had told his nephew what he thought of his patent, and having done so he could not counte-

nance his conduct in having deliberately discarded the excellent advice which he had given him. In the last letter he had written to his nephew he had told him, with all the authority of a rich man to a destitute one, "that he had made his bed, and that he hoped it would be comfortable." After this expression had been read, both Paul Lorryne and his wife decided that it would be waste of time to make any further application.

But what was to be done? There was one other person of whom Paul Lorryne could apply to for assistance, and one only, because no other relative remained to him. This was his cousin Gerard Lorryne, who was with his regiment at Gibraltar, and who, while he was a favourite with most people, was extravagant in his way of living, and had nothing to spare for the necessities of others. This cousin would certainly not be able to help him, for he was always in debt himself, and could not give away what he had not to give. True the young man—an orphan—was the heir of the Gloucestershire uncle, and had a very handsome

allowance from him; but if that allowance was always exceeded, and debt was the consequence, where was the use of asking for a loan? There could be no use; and, besides this, there was another difficulty. Paul had not met his cousin for many years, in consequence of ill-feeling which had been felt by their respective fathers, and which had been owing to the brick-making practices of Paul's parent.

Yes, it would be clearly no use to apply to Gerard Lorrayne for money; and the poor inventor and his wife felt their position very deeply. What with her two children, and the weak state of health into which she had fallen through her anxiety, she was able to earn a very small pittance, and their position became almost desperate. The small house they had at Hatford they could no longer pay the rent of, and they removed to a wretched tenement about half a mile from Windsor. This new habitation, although it was in miserable repair, and was unfit to live in, had two recommendations: it was to be had for next to nothing, and

was apart from other dwellings, being situated in a lane leading from the London Road which had the ill-luck to be called Cut-throat Lane. In this poor place there would be privacy, and so they removed their scanty furniture, and hoped for better times. Alas! the better times refused to come, and from bad they got to worse. The patentee was forced to sell his watch, the wife her rings; and then, little by little, their furniture was parted with.

Help! there seemed none. Paul Lorryne called upon the clergy and others in the neighbourhood; but whenever he opened up the subject of his patent, he was told that he had better go about his business, and not talk of anything so improbable as making bricks by hot-air blast.

It cut the poor creature to the heart to be thus treated, and his torture was increased by seeing that his wife—his loved and patient wife—was slowly sinking from starvation, and could no longer use her talents in earning a few shillings <sup>2!</sup> for their food. The children were well; for,

whatever privation the poor mother underwent, she fed her little ones.

It was a pitiable case. The man was so honest, so certain that his invention was a sound one, and so anxious that it should benefit mankind and not himself alone, that he deserved the commiseration of his fellows in his dreadful need.

And then he felt that he was just upon the point of grand achievements—that any moment he might think of the exact proportions of his system, and turn his failure into real success. He could not dig; he could not labour with his hands like working-men, because the work they did required to be learnt. He could not beg. And yet why not? Was not begging a system practised not only by the poor, but also by the rich? In some form or other, most people asked for things; and in his dire need why should he hang back? Why! The answer was a plain one. Let the seedy-looking, unaccustomed beggar ask for aid, and what chance has he? Your beggar by

profession may, and often does, make quite a competence ; but the poor creature who, with downcast look and timid action begs assistance, may beg for it in vain ; for except he has the luck to meet some tender-hearted being, whose observation reads below the surface just a trifle, he will be told to stand aside, or passed as though the air was tainted by him.

Oh, if his uncle could but see his misery, would he not hold his hand out to assist him ? If he could see his wife—pale and exhausted and scarcely able to attend upon her children—would not his bowels of compassion yearn towards them ? He would write once more. His energy was gone ; but frenzy stirred his brain at times, and gave him temporary strength. Yes ; he would write once more, even though he could not pay the postage. He wrote again, and in a few days an answer to his application was received, the burden of which was this : that as the nephew had preferred to fool away his money rather than to act on good advice, the uncle must adhere to his decision. The nephew



had made his bed ; the uncle hoped it was nice and comfortable. Whether it was so or not, it was quite as comfortable as the nephew deserved.

When Mr. Lorrayne, of Woodleigh Park, had penned his answer, he had not perhaps meant it to be so cutting as it really was. Possibly, he might have thought, that in his observation as to the "bed," he was merely showing what a clever person he was, and how caustic he could make his writings. Whether this was in his mind, I do not know ; but it is certain that the wealthy man was not to be moved from his determination. He had given his nephew sound advice—advice of the very best sort—and it had been thrown to the dogs. Was he to put up with such treatment? No, he wasn't ; and, what was more, nothing should make him, even though he were petitioned by the whole county.

When Paul Lorrayne had penned this last appeal, he had certainly not expected a favourable answer ; but in his weakened state he was driven almost to madness by it, madness at his desperate

condition. Foolish and wicked though he thought his uncle, he was of too just a nature to feel real anger towards him, for what the man had written was quite true. He had rejected the advice. He had made his bed—as his uncle elegantly called it—and if it were only on his own account, he would be content with it without a murmur.

But his wife—his angelic, tender, lovely wife! The poor man hardly knew what he was about, but after midnight he left his cottage, determined that in one way or another he would return with means of aid, even though he had to act the highwayman.

## CHAPTER II.

### LAUREL COTTAGE.

THERE is a stretch of road some ten or twelve miles south-west of London, which is remarkable for its flatness and the good manner in which it is kept. The footpath too is broad and level, and so well is it managed that it is quite a pleasure to walk upon it. The hedges on either side of the road are trimmed and mended with the greatest care, and altogether, for a good many miles, it reflects great credit on the authorities of the different parishes through which it passes.

Like the road, the surrounding country is also very flat; and being easy of cultivation, and good in quality, rich crops may be seen upon it during

the proper seasons of the year ; so that the farmer, and those who delight in agriculture, take especial pleasure in travelling along the well-kept surface of this portion of the London Road. But there is another matter for observation : dotting the margin at no great intervals, are a remarkable variety of houses.

One does not see a row of villas, or houses of the better sort, either detached or otherwise ; but one sees a continuation of dwellings, no two of which seem to be alike in size or value. Here and there, no doubt, there may be a pair of semi-detached cottages of the poorer sort ; but along that distance which most concerns my story, the contrast is very striking. It is not to be wondered at perhaps, because most of them have been built at least some thirty or forty years, and many very much longer. At that time building-land near London was much cheaper ; and so, when a piece of ground was wanted, either for a cottage or for someone well-to-do, there was no difficulty in getting it at a reasonable price.

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A retired tradesman, having foolishly thought that idleness was greater happiness than work, would choose a site, and build himself a comfortable though tasteless edifice, with fruit and flower gardens. Not far from him, some small capitalist would invest his few hundreds in two or three small buildings, which would yearly bring him in some fifteen or twenty pounds apiece.

And so on, along the stretch of road for some few miles, the varied nature and value of the structures was rather noteworthy.

There was one thing, however, which was also noteworthy, and this was the character of the gardens. Whether it was that the flatness of the ground, or the natural goodness of it, induced an easy cultivation, and gave a stimulus for growing fruit and flowers, may be a matter for conjecture; but as a matter of fact, the soil about the houses was so tended that, except in dreary winter, there was always something to gladden and refresh the eye.

No doubt the spirit of imitation had something to do with the general excellence—for man is a creature of imitation from his birth—and doubtless the spirit of honest rivalry may have helped to stir the cultivators; but the result was the same—with few exceptions the gardens were a pleasure to behold.

About three hundred yards beyond the tenth milestone out of London, and half a mile beyond the town of Windsor on this road, was a small detached building called Laurel Cottage. It consisted of but six rooms and a wash-house, and the rent was eighteen pounds a year. To use the words of newspaper advertisements, there was “a good garden back and front.” The advertisements in truth are often deceptive; because the “good garden back and front,” when inspected, prove to be so small or useless as practically to be no garden at all. In the case, however, of Laurel Cottage, a good piece of ground separated it from the road, and behind it there was also a convenient strip for the growing of fruit and

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vegetables. As to the building itself, there was no pretension whatever to ornamental appearance.

It was simply a nearly square structure, with four small rooms upstairs, and the rest on the basement. A few creeping plants were trained against the walls, and in this way there was the beauty which comes from flowers; but squareness and plainness had been the plan of the builder, and he had succeeded very well.

Our story has now to do with the little sitting-room of Laurel Cottage. The window was open, and a young and pretty woman was seated in an easy-chair, waiting the return of her husband. She was not alone, for a pretty little baby-girl, between two and three years old, was playing on the floor, and a comelier little creature it would have been difficult to find. The mother, as she listened to the childish prattle of her little one playing with the headless doll, could not but think how happy was her lot. The furniture was of the cheapest kind; but it was not wanting in artistic taste—as costly furniture may often be—

for Mrs. Westdale's husband was an artist, and he truly thought that gilt and heavy ornament are not required to give a chair or sofa something of simple beauty as to form.

The rush-seated chairs were very inexpensive, but the lines and curves were such as filled the eye with something of respect, and the mind was set a-wondering where they might be bought. There was a sort of sofa, too, of cheap design and made to order. There was no stuffed seat or back to it, these being merely cane; and Mrs. Westdale had herself made cushions which were light and quite sufficient as to comfort. While the mother bent her head over some little garment she was making, from time to time watching with amused and loving interest the gambols of her baby with her doll, her eye would often peep through the geraniums on the window-sill to catch her husband's form as he approached the cottage. He was usually so true to time that whenever she glanced between the flowers she almost felt a certainty of seeing him; and



when at last she saw his hat above the neighbouring hedge, she caught her baby in her arms and went to meet him at the entrance. Fond and proud as he was of his front garden, which was indeed gay with flowers, he gave them no attention as he walked up the narrow pathway.

How could he? With such a pretty, happy-looking wife, and such a laughing, bright-eyed baby-girl, the least the man could do was to give them both all his attention; and so with loud and cheery voice he greeted them.

“Hollo! hollo! I’ll have you—I’ll have you!” he said, making a snatch at his child, which, with shy pretence, hid the laughing face upon the mother’s shoulder. “Well, Janie dear, everything’s all right, I suppose? Have you been out for a walk this lovely day?”

“I haven’t been outside the garden; but baby and I have been so busy there. I’ve been thinning and weeding the onions, and she’s collected them for me. Haven’t you, Molly?” said the young wife, holding the child towards her husband.

“And so little Molly collected the weeds, did she? Come along; let’s go and see. We’ll have some of the young onions for tea; won’t we, mother? But I must put these indoors first.”

“What have you got there, Arthur?”

“Some new-laid eggs. We will have an omelette for tea. I’ll just change my coat, Janie, while you pop on your hat and baby’s. I’ll be down in a moment;” and running up the steep and narrow staircase, Arthur Westdale was soon refreshed by change and water.

“Now then for the onion-bed,” he said as he rejoined his wife. “I seem as if my life depended on the onions, don’t I? but I’m fond of every single thing in the garden if it comes to that.”

“Shall you be ready for tea soon, Arthur? Shall I tell Margaret to make the water boil?”

“Do, Janie, that’s a good girl; but she must get out of my way while I’m making the omelette, you know. People should always stand clear of an omelette maker.”

The Margaret referred to by Mr. Westdale was

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the little maid-of-all-work, who for a very few pounds a year did all the "dirty work" about the place. The girl was a simple little creature, and wore her mob-cap with a sense of much importance, for she thought it a fine thing to be servant to "gentlefolks," such as her employers. She could peel potatoes and boil a kettle, but in the way of cooking she neither could nor was required to do much.

How pleasant it was in the garden that bright summer's afternoon! It was leafy June, when garden crops grow fast and flowers open quickly. And now, as the parents and their little one went out to enjoy the balmy air and mark the progress in the vegetables, they were as happy as mortals well can be. To the refined and educated mind which has some knowledge of the why and wherefore, there is always a happy sense of interest in watching how the seeds and tubers which the hand has planted are growing into plants, and spreading imperceptibly their stems and leaves. It seems like watching by analogy the human

race; and Arthur Westdale, with something of an artist's fancy, would find a sympathy between his little girl and the rapid growing products of the soil. Each day, each week, each month, as it went too quickly by, developed some new beauty in the child; some fresh expression, some curly lock of hair, some look of new intelligence. He was always noting something in the little one which was not so before. And in his garden when he returned each day there was, he fancied, some slight change. The onion-stems were longer; the haulm of the potatoes showed more growth; the rhubarb-leaves were larger and more spreading; and the rose-bud he had noticed in the morning had opened out and gave forth fragrance.

The ripening and decay of man is slow and gradual, and while we watch it we can hardly realise at the time the work of nature. We grow to man or womanhood, and, if we are in health, we do not note much difference in ourselves; we seem as we have always been, and may continue for long years. There comes a time, however, when

the joints are stiff and the thoughts are not elastic as of yore.

We know not how it is, but it is so. Old age has come upon us like a thief; so smoothly and so gradually that it has come unseen. The result, however, is the same—we have grown old; and we are going down the hill, with hastened although tottering step, to lay our bodies like leaves upon the ground.

But in the garden the changes are so rapid that we can take a comprehensive view and fully mark them. We sow the seed, and soon we see the tiny stems appearing on the surface. If the season is a cold one the progress is delayed a week or two, but Nature holds her sway; and then the rush of vegetation opens out leaf by leaf until the ground is covered by the foliage. While this is fresh within our minds the days and weeks fly past us, and in July perhaps, should rain be wanting, there may be a little turning yellow of the leaves. The lower ones may wither, and the upper ones may seem a trifle parched and dusty. We see and

notice everything, because the days are few which cause it. Like the first line or wrinkle in the human face, we notice that there is a change.

September—oh how quickly it has come! The haulm of the potato lies upon the soil, blighted perhaps and yellow. The onions lay their necks upon the bed, seeming quite tired out with past exertion. The gooseberry-trees are bare of fruit, and here and there the fading foliage shows the whitening stems. Another little month, which goes so soon with man that he can hardly feel that it has passed, and general decay marks the vegetation in the garden. Where are the strawberries, and the raspberries, and the currants? They are gone. Where are the onions? They are taken from their beds and lie upon the roof of that low outhouse, to dry for winter storing. As we walk about the garden, it seems useless to labour any more this season; so we saunter idly, until the time arrives to put the ground in order for another year.

But in the Westdales' little garden behind

Laurel Cottage there was no decay, for everything was growing as it only grows in early summer ; and the ground having been freshened by a shower which had fallen in the morning, gave off that sort of growing perfume which the gardener knows so well.

“ Well done, Janie, you have been busy ; but you have not thinned them out enough—we must give them a little more room, or they will be all pickling onions,” said Westdale.

“ You like pickled onions, Arthur, and so do I for that matter,” replied his wife ; “ we will put them into baby’s basket, won’t we ? ” she added.

The little one was no way loath, and so a bunch of salad onions was soon collected and placed in the happy child’s basket.

“ How pretty those carrot-tops are ; they almost look like ferns ; we shall have a good crop of them, I think—by-the-bye, they want thinning too ; I must see about that,” said Westdale.

“ Shall you earth up the potatoes, Arthur ? ”

“ I don’t think I shall trouble myself to do

that—so far as I can see, they produce as much without it; I shall just move the ground between the rows with the Canterbury hoe.”

“I suppose we ought to have done it before, ought we not?”

“Yes; but it’s rather hard work, and although I don’t mind it, my hand is apt to shake at the easel if I use a heavy hoe.”

“Then don’t do it, dear. I’m sure the potatoes will do very well without it. Here is Margaret coming to say that the water boils and everything is ready for tea.”

“Come along then; now for an omelette. Here, take your rubbishing baby while I turn cook,” said Westdale; and with light and happy hearts the trio returned to the house.

The little servant-maid had made her preparations for the meal with care and more intelligence, than girls of her age and class are often found to bestow upon their work. She had seen the bag of eggs which Mr. Westdale had left in the passage, and had transferred them to a dish upon the



kitchen-table. The frying-pan was ready on the oven, and the milk and flour were at hand, so that when the amateur cook turned up his cuffs and looked about him everything was ready.

Mrs. Westdale, with little Molly in her arms, stood watching him; and the cracking of the eggs, the mixing them with a little milk and a spoonful of flour, and the pouring the preparation into the pan, was matter for much merry laughter with the mother and child.

“Shall we have it plain or *au confiture*?” said Westdale, with the handle of the pan in his hand to tilt it at the proper angle.

“Plain will do very nicely, Arthur; there isn’t much jam left; baby had a lot at dinner-time.”

But there are always two sides to a question. The little one had quite understood its purport, and thought she had every right to an opinion.

“No—sham, sham,” she said, battling her arms about, and showing signs of dissatisfaction.

“What a rogue it is!” said the fond mother;

“you really must not cry for everything, you know, Molly;” but as the father had put the question generally, she felt that the child had some right to an opinion, and she therefore trotted off for the jam-pot.

Perhaps some artist such as Wilkie, had he seen the happy group in the homely little kitchen, might not have disdained to put it on his canvas. There was the tall and handsome man, with refined and well-bred look, lifting the omelette from the frying-pan and laying it upon the dish, while his young wife, with her baby, watched the process with smiling interest. The outstretched arms and eager gestures of the child gave life to the scene, and in the background the little servant-maid, looking on with respectful admiration, formed a contrast to the other figures. For the rest there was a homely room, which, homely though it was, seemed to have something in keeping with an artist’s fancy. Upon the floor was a bordered eastern rug, bought partly for its cheapness and partly for its sober decorative look; the boards outside it being kept white and

clean by little Margaret. The wooden chairs were cheap enough, as such chairs are, but there was a realistic grace about them not without its charm ; and on the dresser, the blue-and-white dinner-service and the water-jugs would have suggested the words " how pretty ! " to a young lady looking in and fond of art.

Perhaps it was the constant handling of the pencil and the brush, which gave the omelette-maker such accurate constructive power, for it requires an artist's touch almost to make a good sweet omelette, or perhaps it was the power which comes from practice ; but as Arthur Westdale placed the jam within the omelette and gently covered it, it might be truly said that few could have excelled him in results.

A bright little cover is placed upon the dish, and then it is taken to the parlour.

The tea is made, and the salad and the bread and butter all look fresh and tempting. The little one sits upon her mother's lap, and drinks her milk with that loud sucking noise which is

attractive to the parent's ears; but she will have her portion of the omelette or know the reason why. "Dere, dere!" she cries, with the tiny forefinger pointing to the tempting dish. "Wait a minute, Molly; just let me eat this hunch of bread-and-butter," says the father; and thus the meal progresses, more liked and beneficial than though it had consisted of rich viands, with old and costly wines to wash them down.

That evening in the twilight, Westdale and his wife stood at the little entrance-gate, enjoying the calm summer air, and taking note of the foot-passengers as they passed upon the causeway.

To a young man and woman who are bound with ties of love, such an hour in the summer-time can hardly fail to tinge the thoughts and conversation with reflection.

"Why do we feel so happy here—so especially happy I mean?" said the young wife. "I have been cheerful and contented all my days, but there seems a special peace and comfort in this little home!"

"It is because we love each other, and do not wish for what we haven't got," said Westdale.

"There is something more than that, Arthur. I cannot quite define the feeling, or express it; and yet it occupies my mind."

"I mean people like ourselves, who married on such slender means, have hardly any right to be contented? Is that what hovers in your thoughts, dear Jenny?"

"No; not that, dear. It is a feeling as though we were clutching—grasping our existence; can you catch my meaning in the slightest?"

"I almost think I can, and the feeling has—no, not troubled me—but set me pondering. As I have sat before my easel, my mind has often wandered to what you speak about. Is it because our simple wants are all within our means? I have often asked myself; or is it because we make no attempt to do what we have no money for? I think it must be partly this; for trouble and anxiety are often brought about by not cutting the coat according to the cloth."

“No doubt it is partly that—and chiefly because we love each other, and have our dear little baby-girl; but it seems to me that in this little home we realise our existence more. Do you see my meaning?”

“Ah, you are right, dear—I begin to find a definition from your words. Yes; it must be that we feel and realise our *individuality*; that we are not smothered, as it were, by mixture with the world, or household cares, or quarrels or disputes with neighbours, or by other causes which come to persons who live in what is called Society. No; our pleasures are the simplest, our homes the humblest, our wants within our reach; and our time is not alloyed by idleness, our world is with each other. Yes; it is our *individuality* which we feel and know; and as life passes we really *have* the hours as they go.”

“And then the smallness of the house—the little kitchen, the one sitting-room—we seem so identified with all of it, so part and parcel of the whole,” said the wife, warming with interest as the subject opened out to her; “and then

there is a sense of freedom in feeling that we live differently from others of our class."

"Yes; we are educated and refined, and we have the sense to live as many of our class almost disdain to do. The result is contentment, comfort, happiness, and, as I said, a sense of individuality which has its special charms."

"I wish we could make the time go slower, Arthur. Could we just live and die as we are now—what more could either of us wish!"

"Ah, Janie, as time goes on there will be changes. If I succeed—and you will wish me to get on, will you not?—we shall have to extend our borders, and then perhaps instead of standing by a little wooden gate, watching the footpads and the bats, we may be living in a good-sized house, where we must act as do our neighbours. Ay, that's about it, is it not?"

"Yes, I suppose so Arthur—we must exchange freedom for conventionality. But we will not think of it. There is the Sluggard, standing at his gate and enjoying his pipe."

Arthur Westdale looked towards the spot

which took his wife's attention. At the gate of a good-sized and rather well-built-looking house, and situated about fifty yards higher up the road, stood a man of middle age, clad in what seemed to be a dressing-gown, and with slippers on his feet. This was Mr. Midass; but in the neighbourhood he was sometimes called The Sluggard.

He was an eccentric person in his way, and we will reserve him for another chapter.



## CHAPTER III.

### ARTHUR WESTDALE AND HIS WIFE.

It is as well, perhaps indeed much better, to give some slight description of the lives of the principal characters in a history before they appear upon the scene. If this plan is not adopted, there is often a vagueness—an idealistic fogginess—about them which is not quite satisfactory to the reader of their histories, and takes off something of the realistic quality which is necessary to good constructive portraiture. This being so—at least to my idea—I will tell something of the lives of Arthur Westdale and his wife before they married.

The former had passed through Sandhurst

College, and had held a commission in the army some seventeen years before the opening of my story, and had served Her Majesty in various quarters of the globe. He had been in India, but there having been no wars with neighbouring states during his service there, he had had no chance of earning for himself distinction or military glory. He had, however, early shown an aptitude for drawing, and to pass away the tedious hours and improve himself in a knowledge he delighted in, he had made a large collection of studies and drawings of Himalayan scenery, and the bold and beautiful hills and valleys of Cashmere. From India the regiment had gone to New Zealand, and from thence to Australia, and had at last returned to England, when Westdale was not only a subaltern, but likely to continue so. From England the regiment was sent to Ireland, and it was there he met his wife. About the quiet town where he was quartered the country was unusually picturesque. The woods and streams and rugged boulders, and Irish cabins with their quaint

surroundings, were all an artist and a lover of wild nature could well wish for; and so it chanced that, so soon as he could get away from barracks, he took his block and colours, and wandered off to occupy himself with writing down the beauties of the landscape. His wanderings were generally made alone, for in a regiment it is perhaps unusual to find many who have the love of art so strong within them that they will work at it with block and pencil.

So Westdale, besides the paraphernalia which the artist must ever carry with him, had only his pipe and his favourite terrier to keep him company. There was one direction he was very fond of taking. This was where a rapid trout-stream danced through some fertile grass-land, which was backed by wooded hills. There were few houses of the better sort about, and when he took up his position he had few, if any, lookers-on, to peep over his shoulder and to watch his work.

There was one figure, however, which he not

unfrequently saw in this direction, in the form of a young and elegant girl, who was destined to become his wife. She could not of course come up to him and watch him drawing; but Westdale seemed to think that she would like to do so if only propriety permitted.

His terrier made acquaintance with her black retriever; but there was no excuse for speaking, and so he would bend his head over his work while she passed on. After she had done so, however, he not unnaturally followed with his eyes her retreating figure, and could not but think that such easy grace and outline must own a charming nature. There was a pretty cottage on the hillside, with its verandah and flower-garden, where she evidently lived; and as he filled in his drawing, he used to wonder who besides the girl herself lived in this retired spot.

Occasionally he would see her with an older lady, who he was certain was her mother; and so he at last rightly concluded that mother and daughter lived in the cottage, and had very

small means, and were happy in their quiet way ; but would like something more lively if they had the choice.

One day the bright idea occurred to the officers of Westdale's regiment, to give a quiet dance to the few people who lived within easy distance of the barracks ; and when the festive day arrived, Westdale had the pleasure of meeting the fair pedestrian. They met like friends almost, and had so much to talk about, that the greater part of the evening was spent together. Miss Fernley introduced him to her mother, and from that day Westdale was a constant visitor to the pretty cottage. He found it was impossible to be in the girl's company and not to love her ; which, pleasant though the sentiment might be, had this one drawback—that it led to mutual love and talk of marriage. Westdale had but a trifle beyond his pay, and she, poor girl, had not a farthing—or was she likely to have anything, for her mother lived on an annuity, and could hardly save much.

From this time Westdale was always sketching on his favourite ground; and Jane Fernley, now that she was engaged to him, would come and make sweet music to his ear by her pleasant conversation; the topic, as to whether it would be possible in any way, with his small means and work of some sort to make them larger, to unite their fortunes and bind their souls for ever to each other, being the one they liked the best. Miss Fernley thought it would; and she gave some details of her mother's frugal household to show the possibility. But nice as it all sounded, Westdale had never heard of such simple living in the marriage state, and thought it quite impossible for them to try it. The time went on, however, and the girl got dearer and dearer to him; and acting chiefly under her advice, and much in opposition to his sense of prudence, they were married. He had been a subaltern for many years, and saw no chance of any rise in his profession; so he took the money which his length of service gave him claim to, and with his wife

went up to London, to train himself for art as a profession. The mother, on her daughter's marriage, went to live with an unmarried sister—also a small annuitant—at Dublin; and hoped by thus uniting means to save some little portion for her child.

Westdale had himself a father living, but no mother, and he was an only child. This father was reputed poor by most people, and certainly he lived as if he were so; but there were others who said the strange old man had money, and plenty of it, if only he would spend it.

If he had money, his son knew nothing of it, and certainly got no portion of it; his parent, when he went to see him, bemoaning his hard fate at being poor. Time elapsed, the little baby-girl was born, and Westdale worked hard at home and at the School of Art at Kensington. He had undoubtedly some talent, but although he now and then sold his work to dealers for small sums, he knew, and his wife was forced to own it, that he must not look to get high prices

for his pictures. He did and would paint nicely ; but he had not that high gift which counts success as sure, and, to the fortunate possessor, is a mine of wealth. But they were happy and contented ; and who can hope or wish for more ? They did not certainly ; but they thought that fresher air than London gave them, would be better for their baby, and so they went to live at Laurel Cottage. Here their expenses were less than in the suburbs ; their garden gave them vegetables, their fowls supplied the eggs, while the busy little Margaret decreased the washing-bill by her labours at the tub. There was the journey up and down by railway, it was true ; but Westdale's season-ticket did not cost him much, and second-class was good enough for him ; so that altogether they gained by moving to the country. No doubt the loving wife and daughter wished she could have her mother nearer, but this perhaps would come in time ; and for the rest, who so light-hearted and happy as pretty Mrs. Arthur Westdale in her humble



little home? Now and again old Mr. Westdale would make a journey down from London, and perhaps would bring a bag of oranges or a shilling box of figs for the little granddaughter; but he seldom stayed for any meal, and would complain loudly of the "badness of the times," especially as they acted on his welfare.

He was sorely afraid, he said, that he should end his days in the workhouse, where so little work is done. He was almost certain that the dreadful "badness of the times" would absorb his slender pittance, and leave him to beg his way about, provided always he denied himself the pleasures of the workhouse; and, in short, the old gentleman was always so apparently dejected, and so full of dire forebodings, that his son's wife felt quite depressed and sorry for his misery, and somewhat thankful when he took his leave.

To explain the eccentricities of old Mr. Westdale would be to anticipate my story somewhat; I will merely say that he owned a house in London, and let the greater part of it as lodgings. He

complained of being feeble and dyspeptic, but he was wiry, and for his time of life had a powerful digestion. Why he did not exercise it more was known only to himself. For many years he had never given a present to his son, and his son did not expect him to do so. In fact, so poor was the old man by his own statement, that Arthur Westdale had hinted that a pound or two of his own small means would be forthcoming if there was urgent need.

## CHAPTER IV.

“’TIS THE VOICE OF THE SLUGGARD.”

It has already been mentioned that in a substantial house a little higher up the road there dwelt a Mr. Midass, commonly called by the profane “The Sluggard.” How he had got this name no one pretended to explain. His godfathers and godmother, of course, had nothing to do with it; and he naturally had not fixed it on himself. The result was the same, however—he was called The Sluggard; and although no one had ever seen the man asleep, he was said to have about him a very sluggish look, and in general appearance to be not unlike a slug. He was a man about fifty years of age, and, as to features, he was

rather handsome. He had a pale, grave, calm face, which was full of quiet thought; and his dark eyes were those of one who takes note of everything, and meditates thereon.

That which gave him a sluggish look, perhaps, was the way in which he dressed. In fine weather he might be generally seen standing at his entrance-gate, or strolling on the gravel walk before his house, and on these occasions he was always clad in a long loose robe, something like a dressing-gown, and with slippers on his feet.

He was always smoking—at least when out of doors—and his sleek plump look had suggested to someone the likeness to a slug. So it came about that Mr. John Midass had not only got to be called a sluggard from his lazy ways, but was likened to a slug from his long, plump, sleek appearance.

Although his house was a good-sized one, he was entirely looked after by one old woman, who was certainly no sluggard whatever her master may have been; and, to use her own expression,

she was "at it from early morning until such time as she was allowed to go to bed." She was an ugly old woman, and in truth a dirty one to boot; but she was said to be a very honest person, and to do her duty in that state of life to which she had been called.

Perhaps Mr. Midass thought it more proper to have a dependent who was old, and ugly, and dirty; it might have been this which caused him to select her as his drudge; or it might have been for no special reason that he chose her. There she was, however, looking old and ugly; and there he was, looking sleek and sluggish. Mr. Midass had a man to work his garden, and to milk his cow, and feed his cob; but this good man did not live upon the premises, and having a great deal of work to do, found little time for conversation with his master or the woman.

There was a large extent of garden, more, indeed, than could be kept in anything like neatness by one man, so that the flowers grew untrimmed, and the grass upon the lawn was rough

and coarse. There were plenty of vegetables and fruit, and what Mr. Midass and his servant could not eat was sold, the principal benefiter being the good gardener himself; for he so managed it, that the chief portion of the money remained in his own pocket. He argued that there was no dishonesty in acting thus, because his master was a sluggard, and must expect a sluggard's reward. Could he have read the Sluggard's thoughts, he would have known that all his misdeeds were detected, and he would have paused, perhaps; but then, perhaps, he wouldn't, for dishonest men are always fools, and do not heed their danger. But, although his flower-garden was unkempt, this did not vex the Sluggard; on the contrary, he liked it. He liked to see the roses growing in untrimmed luxuriance, and the common brier holding its own in bold defiance. He liked to see the jasmine and the honeysuckle having their will upon the wall and porch, and to notice the self-sown flower-seeds producing the annual blossom.

It was not from laziness and stinginess that he

suffered this apparent negligence. He was not like Dr. Watts's sluggard in this respect; for that gentleman allowed his garden to be overrun, in consequence of his bed-loving propensities. No; Mr. Midass preferred the wildness of his garden, and this being so, no one had a right to blame him.

What he did with himself all day no one could say with any certainty; but it was supposed he read and studied learned books. When he was not engaged in indoor occupations, he was generally at his garden-gate, dressed in his long robe and slippers, and studying human nature as it passed along the road. The beggar and the tramp—fond as they are of assistance, seldom begged of him—for in his cool, calm, keen expression there was that which told them they might save themselves the trouble. He would talk, however, with such passers-by as cared to hold some converse with him, and the impression left upon these persons' minds was that Mr. Midass was a deep one, and that they shouldn't like to trust him beyond their sight.

With Arthur Westdale and his wife he was on friendly easy terms, and in the dusk on summer-evenings he would sometimes walk across the road in his red-slippered feet, and beg them to accept a basket of his choicest fruit, or a cucumber or two, or something which they didn't grow themselves.

On these occasions some pleasant talk would be exchanged—on art, philosophy, or politics—and often they would stand beside the gate at Laurel Cottage, until the moon was up, and the stars began to shine. Each of us have perhaps our own idea of happiness, and meditation seemed to be the Sluggard's. At all events the Westdales thought it was so with him; and, to tell the truth, they rather liked the man.

“Are you not afraid of being robbed, Mr. Midass?” said Westdale one evening to him as he was about to cross over to his house.

“Robbed!” was the answer; “who would rob me—what have I to covet?”

But Westdale had heard it whispered that the



solitary man had hoarded gold within his walls, and he almost credited the story.

"Thieves come sometimes for what they hope to find," he said. "I have heard the neighbours count you rich."

"They will find little money in my house. I have some books of value; but books are not what thieves come for."

"Well, let us hope they won't come at all," said Westdale. "The dew begins to fall heavily; we had better go indoors," he added to his wife.

## CHAPTER V.

“IT’S ONLY ME.”

ARTHUR WESTDALE was sitting one night in the little kitchen, smoking his pipe, and looking over some old papers and correspondence. It was his custom to use the kitchen as a smoking-room after the active Margaret had gone to roost, because the sitting-room was limited in size, and apt to smell most disagreeably in the morning if used for smoking overnight. To tell the truth, he had been alternately dozing and reading, and reading and dozing, so long, that it was after twelve o’clock; and he was still in the wooden armchair, forgetful of the hour.

His wife had sat with him until eleven o’clock, and had gone upstairs on the promise of his fol-

lowing in a few minutes, which promise he had failed, through sleepiness, to comply with. She had "dawdled" over her preparations for bed—rubbing up her few little articles of jewellery, and reading over the last few letters from her mother, hoping each moment that her husband would come upstairs, and thus enable her to close her eyes with a knowledge that he was safe and sound in bed.

She waited and waited, and she would have rapped upon the floor with her foot, or the but-end of the poker, to bring her husband up to bed; but Laurel Cottage was not, as advertisements describe the run-up houses nowadays, substantially built, and any rapping on the floor might wake the baby or the industrious little servant. Knocking being thus out of the question, Mrs. Westdale opened her door, and, going down the creaky staircase, went into the kitchen. As she expected, her husband was fast asleep; his pipe having fallen from his hand, and the candle guttering in a very wasteful manner.

“I thought I should find you asleep!” she said, smiling, as the roused husband stared at her with that vacant look so common to disturbed sleepers; “do you know what time it is, dear?”

“It’s late, I fear; I will go to bed at once, for I must be up early to-morrow. Just get me the limejuice, Janie; this warm weather makes me thirsty.”

Mrs. Westdale soon got the refreshing beverage, and the pleasant drink so acted on her husband that he felt inclined to spend a few more minutes talking to his wife.

His glass was almost empty, and he had pushed back the wooden chair preparatory to rising from it, when a tapping was heard at the front door. The hour was now nearer one than twelve, and therefore the summons at the entrance was not a little singular. “What’s that!” said Mrs. Westdale, with a slight look of consternation in her face.

“It’s somebody knocking at the door—some tramp perhaps,” said Westdale. “I will soon settle that matter;” and determining to give the

tramp—if tramp it was—a good scolding for his audacity, he took up the candle and proceeded to the door. Mrs. Westdale stood behind him at a respectful distance, but still prepared to defend him to the utmost, if he should need her aid. She had in truth all a woman's natural and graceful timidity, but at the same time there was a pluck and courage about her which on occasion would stand out very markedly.

"Who's there?" said Westdale, in a low voice. But whether it was owing to the deafness of the person or the low voice of the questioner, no answer was returned.

"Who's there?" said Westdale again, in a rather louder tone.

"It's only me," answered the rather cracked and tremulous voice of a woman.

"Who's *me*?" said Westdale, with some natural impatience in his tone.

"I do believe it's old Mrs. Peabody, the Sluggard's housekeeper," whispered Mrs. Westdale, who had now crept up close to her husband;

“perhaps he’s ill, Arthur; you had better open the door at once.”

But Arthur did not quite see the matter in the same light as did his wife.

“What do you want at this hour? Can’t you tell me what you want and who you are?” he said.

“I’m Mr. Midass’s cook, sir. He’s caught a thief, sir; please to open the door,” said the cracked voice of poor Mrs. Peabody, who would doubtless have relished a cup of tea with a dash of spirits in it.

“Caught a thief, Arthur,” repeated Mrs. Westdale; “she says Mr. Midass has caught a thief.”

“Caught a *what?*” said Westdale, who was still reluctant to open his door at that late hour.

“A thief, sir; a great fat thief, Mr. Westdale; leastways, he ain’t so very fat, from the glimpse I had of ’im; but he’s a real thief, sir, I do assure you,” said the poor woman, whose nerves were yielding with the prospect of assistance for her master.

Mrs. Westdale, in her impatience to have the door opened, acted the part of a chorus, and explained the old woman's predicament. "She says Mr. Midass has caught a thief of some kind—a fat one, she said at first; do open the door, dear."

Like the boys on the 5th of November, who can see "no reason" for forgetting the remembrance of the day, so Arthur Westdale could, in his present state of mind, see no reason why, if Mr. Midass chose to catch thieves, he should be disturbed in consequence. However, he undid the bolt of the door and turned the lock, and there, in the summer's night, stood poor Mrs. Peabody, all of a tremble.

"I don't think he can do master no great harm, Mr. Westdale, because he's caught, and can't get away again. He's caught hisself like, don't yer see?" said the pardonably frightened woman. "Dear, dear, it's a mercy we wasn't a-murdered in our beds! You haven't such a thing as a drop of spirits, have you, ma'am?" she added

to Mrs. Westdale. "You might knock me down with a feather, that you might."

The Westdales kept no spirits in the usual form at Laurel Cottage, but a dose of sal-volatile was offered as a substitute. Mrs. Peabody had however no knowledge of that useful stimulant, and therefore deferred the brandy-drinking until she got back again to her master's house.

"Now, what's all this fuss about, my good woman? Does Mr. Midass want any assistance? Did he send you for me?" said Westdale, reaching his hat from a peg, and looking out a stick from the corner of the passage.

"Yes, sir. He said if I see a perliceman I was to call him; but as that wasn't likely, I had better go to you, as you was a kind gentleman, and would do it to give hevidence," said Mrs. Peabody, who thought "evidence" was the insect-destroying powder of thieves.

"Very well, then; I'll go," said Westdale. "I shall be back again as soon as possible Janie," he added to his wife; and with that comforting



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assurance, without more ado, he traversed the short distance to the Sluggard's house. The gas was burning in the hall, for Salisbury House, as Mr. Midass's dwelling was called, had gas laid on, and Mrs. Peabody had, with much good judgment, lit up the most prominent burners, with a view to giving the place a less thievish appearance; so that when Westdale entered there was quite a cheerful look there. No doubt when the thief had entered upon his base design the night had been a dark one; but now the clouds had cleared away, and the moon shone out in all her beauty.

There is a softened grandeur in the moon's light, which seems to place the wickedness of man quite out of keeping with the hour and the place which is illumined by the silvery beams. It seems almost impossible to think, as one walks along a pleasant country road upon a moonlight night, that there can be thieves and robbers, and villains of various persuasions, plotting their base designs and mapping out their villainies. The rascals will wait until the clouds obscure the light again. But how is it that

their wicked fancies do not turn aside during the moonlight's fairy hour, and change to softened longings for amendment? How is it that the heavy tree-tops, bathed in the silver rays, and the long shadows on the whitened ground, do not set them thinking of a purer life, a longing to be good and honest once again?

Ah, how is it? There may, for all we know, have been conversions—changes from bad to good—caused by some beauteous night-lit landscape. This may have been so; but I fear but seldom. Your sturdy robber will admire the public-house he passes, as its quiet front is sobered by the moonshine; he will wish he could be sitting on the bench outside, quaffing the strong ale which he loves so well. But as he gazes, he sees his lengthened shadow on the wall, and hears some watchful animal—the goose, perhaps—sounding a note of caution as it hears the stealthy steps. And he hastens on, fearful of being seen.

## CHAPTER VI.

### THE PATENTEE'S DESPAIR.

IN saying that her master had caught a thief, Mrs. Peabody had spoken incorrectly, for he had done no such thing. What had happened was this. Mr. Midass was sitting in his smoking-room, which opened on to the garden by a French window, and was thinking that it was time to seek the downy couch, when the figure of a man stood before him, who had almost the appearance of a madman. The face of this strange visitor was naturally a handsome one; but it was emaciated and wild-looking, and the eyes glared with a light which seemed the result of fever and anxiety.

Mr. Midass was not a nervous person—on the

contrary, he was remarkably cool; but he was not without some slight apprehension for his safety as he looked upon his visitor. If the man was mad, he said to himself, it would only make him more mad to make a fuss of any sort; so stopping the tobacco in his pipe, he smoked on quietly, and waited. The madman, if madman he was, looked at the Sluggard, and the Sluggard looked at the madman; but for a time neither of them spoke.

“What business have you here? How dare you come into my private room at this hour of the night?” said Mr. Midass at last.

“I want help, and you must give it me,” said the other, in a voice so full of agony and almost fierceness that the Sluggard turned a shade paler.

“You want help? This is a pretty way to come for it! What do you mean by such conduct?”

“I hardly know what I am saying or doing; but help I must have. Do not deny it to me—pray do not! I am starving; and my wife—my dear sweet wife—is dying from starvation. You

roll in wealth, men say. Oh, give—or lend me just sufficient to help my cruel want, and——” The poor creature could proceed no further, but uttering a cry of anguish, he sank upon the floor.

Here was a situation for a sluggard of quiet peaceful character! It was trying, it was very trying, but there was no help for it; this wretched man was in his room, upon the floor, and he must be got rid of at any rate; perhaps indeed assisted.

“Get up, do,” said Mr. Midass; “your voice is that of an educated man, so that you can explain your conduct if you will. Get up, I say; or I shall send for the police.”

But the poor man remained motionless; he was too exhausted for further speech; and with closed eyes and breathing heavily he was silent.

The Sluggard, as has been already seen, was a philosopher; but, unlike most philosophers, he had something of the milk of human kindness in his nature. He seldom showed this weakness, and didn't like it to be known, but still he had it; and as he looked upon the prostrate man, his sense of

pity stirred within him. He lingered a moment to see if the man moved, and finding that he did not, drew his flowing robe around him, and left the room to call his housekeeper.

“Mrs. Peabody,” he said; “get up and go across to Laurel Cottage, and see if you can wake up Mr. Westdale. If you can, ask him to come over; for there is a man in my study that I don’t know how to deal with.”

Now this order was tiresome for the good lady inasmuch as she had been in bed some time, and would have been asleep had it not been that she had heard strange talking, and had woke up in consequence. There was, however, an excitement about getting up in the middle of the night which was not altogether disagreeable, and so she huddled on her petticoats, and was soon downstairs.

“What am I to say?” she said, when she confronted her master.

“Say! just what I have told you, and be quick; do you hear?” said the Sluggard; who knew that soft words were useless with Mrs. Peabody, and

who wished to get back to the poor man in his study.

Thus instructed, the disturbed woman crossed the road to Laurel Cottage, and told her errand as given in the foregoing chapter.

When Westdale appeared upon the scene he was indeed astonished. The madman, or beggar, or robber, or whatever he was, had recovered consciousness; for Mr. Midass had forced a few drops of stimulant into his mouth, and he was again upon his feet. He was truly a sad sight to look at; for his worn-out clothes hung so loosely upon his shrunken limbs, that he looked little better than a scarecrow, and a wild excitement was returning to his eyes. He was evidently anxious to tell his story, and to carry out his purpose in coming there.

“Who is this fellow?” said Westdale, looking from the Sluggard to the stranger, and from the stranger to the Sluggard, in utter bewilderment.

“At present I know no more than you do, Mr. Westdale,” said Midass. “He came in through

the open window as I was sitting here; and he says he is starving."

"He certainly looks it."

"And he demanded assistance with a good deal of excitement. He had no business to do that."

"Certainly not; or to come here at all, for that matter. Who are you? and what are you?" said Westdale to the man. "Can't you speak?"

"I am a starving maddened wretch," said the poor creature, speaking with the force which an excited brain will sometimes give the weakest. "My grief, my deep despair, has driven me almost wild; and I cannot help myself or those I love. I saw a light here and I entered; thinking to get assistance in some way, either by violence or otherwise."

"By violence!" said Westdale. "Do you mean to say you would have robbed this gentleman?"

"I felt that if assistance was not given me, as would most likely be the case, I would take what I required, if I had the strength to do so. But I hadn't," added the man. "I have not strength to



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grapple with a child. I am starving; but I care not for myself. I would gladly exchange this world of sin and suffering for another, if I were alone. But my wife is starving also—is dying on her solitary bed, whilst I have made this last attempt to get assistance.”

“I wish you had come at a more convenient hour,” said the Sluggard coolly; and sending from his placid lips large clouds of smoke. “Your story may be true or false; partly one and partly the other, I daresay. Have you such a thing as a knife about you, with which you could cut a person’s throat?”

“Do not taunt me. By the heaven above us, by the bright moon and stars which shed their softened light to-night upon the calm and happy, as on the wretched and destitute, what I say can give no measure of my state of wretchedness. You are rich, men say. If you had worked as I have—had denied your body bread, that you might feed the offspring of your brain—you would understand my want of help perhaps. If you had a wife

—beautiful and tender, uncomplaining, suffering, and dying—you would know the anguish which slashes at my heart. Oh, do not sit there so quietly! Stir yourself, man! There may yet be time to save her! Stir yourself, I say!” and the stranger showed signs of an outbreak into frenzy.

“I will put his statement to the test—in part, at all events,” said Westdale. “What is your name, and where do you live?” he added.

“My name is Paul Lorrayne,” said the man, striving to keep calm. “I *live*,” he added, with a smile of ghastly bitterness, “in Cut-throat Lane; some half a mile from here.”

“And you would have, made this Cut-throat House, I daresay, if you had had the power,” said the Sluggard; passing his hand over his smooth sleek neck.

“Have you any business—any occupation?” said Westdale.

“I am a patentee, a luckless patentee.”

“A what?” said Mr. Midass.

“A patentee, sir. My patent would enrich the world, but instead of that it has——”

“Brought you to beggary. Well, stop a moment,” said the Sluggard. “Mrs. Peabody!” he called to the old woman, who had retired for a nip of brandy; “get a cup of my beef-tea.”

Mrs. Peabody heard the order, and taking another taste from the mouth of the brandy bottle, she called out “Yes, sir,” and executed the order.

“Give it me,” said Westdale, when the tea was brought; “swallow this.” And placing the cup in the man’s hands, he almost forced it down his throat. “Now, if you feel able to lead me to your house, I will follow you,” he added.

“Yes, yes; let us go at once. It is on their account that I came here to-night; come quickly.” And moving through the open window, Paul Lorrayne—for it was none other than the subject of my opening chapter—waited anxiously for Westdale.

“Stop a minute, Mr. Westdale,” said the Sluggard, who saw the effect the words had upon

him; "this may be acting—consummate acting. I cannot form a judgment at present. He is a man of superior education, and may be some drunken vagabond who can act a lie as well as tell one."

But Westdale was not so impassive as the Sluggard. There was not only education in the stranger's voice, but a tone of refinement which even his pitiable condition could not do away with.

"His hollow cheeks and wasted body tell a tale beyond mere acting," he said. "Let us go; I will help you if I can," he added to the sufferer.

Stepping out into the clear night, Paul Lorrayne led the way along the moonlit road, the tremulous accents of the one, and the firm clear tones of the other, being the only sounds to break the silence.

Some hundred yards behind them walked the Sluggard. In one hand he held a jug containing beef-tea, and in the other the bottle of brandy,

in which Mrs. Peabody had made a considerable hole.

The woman herself brought up the rear; grumbling and scolding loudly, that a pack of thieves who ought to be hanging at Newgate, or Margate—she was not quite sure where the prison was situated—should keep honest folks out of their warm beds at such an hour of the night.

After proceeding about half a mile, Westdale was taken up a strip of narrow lane, and then his companion stopped before a low wooden hut or cottage, and, lifting the latch, walked in. The light of the moon was so brilliant that there was no need of any other, and remaining at the entrance, Westdale caught the accents of a low, weak, suffering voice:

“Is that you, Paul? Oh, where have you been? I thought I should have died without seeing you again! Come to me, dearest; we have always loved each other! Come—come——” And the voice, which seemed to give the words with difficulty, was silent.

“You hear that!” said Paul Lorrayne fiercely, springing into the room. “Great Heaven! am I too late? It is I, dearest—it is Paul—I have brought assistance. Oh, for Heaven’s sake, if you can help me, do so now!” said the wretched man; and with a cry of anguish he threw himself upon the bed from which the voice had come.

Westdale was no unwilling helper. Tearing aside the curtain, which obscured the moonlight, and admitting air, he darted out into the road again and called loudly to the Sluggard.

“Be quick, be quick! What have you there—beef-tea—brandy? Well done; perhaps we may not be too late. Go in, and if you can see, force a few drops of the stimulant down her throat. I will run back for a light.” And putting out all his speed and power, Westdale sped back again along the road at such a pace as few could have excelled.

“Come back,” he called to Mrs. Peabody as he passed her; “come back, d’you hear!” and the old woman, nothing loath, retraced her steps; still grumbling loudly.

Westdale, when he got back to Mr. Midass's house, ran into the kitchen, and snatched up a candle and a box of lights. He then went into the pantry, where he found a jug of milk; with which, and some bread, he prepared to go back to the cottage. Mrs. Peabody was just re-entering the house as he left it, and he begged the old woman, as she valued her future state, to bring a bottle of hot water and some blankets as quickly as she could. Having given these directions, he was not longer getting over the ground than the nature of his load would permit, and striking a light upon the threshold, he again entered the abode of misery. The crying of children came from a second room, but it was weak and low, as of those who might be upon a bed of sickness.

And now by the light of the candle the whole scene was disclosed. Upon a mattress, covered with what looked like rags of some description, lay a woman in a state of insensibility; and bending over her were her wretched husband and

the Sluggard. By the direction of the latter, the former was chafing the face and hands with brandy, tears of agony running down his poor cheeks as he did so; while the Sluggard himself was peering about for something to pour a little beef-tea into, so as to force it into the poor creature's mouth if she should again recover consciousness.

"Now then," said Westdale, "let us see what we can do—here is a mug and a spoon;—fan her face with my hat, and I will see to the children." And going into the next compartment he found two little creatures sitting up upon a miserable bed, and clutching each other in all the misery of fear and want.

"Lie down again my dears;—some friends have come to see you—here is some milk; drink a little and lie down again," said Westdale, in those gentle sympathising tones, which can only come from a tender manly heart.

He had some little trouble to induce the children to take the nourishment, for they both cried bitterly for their mother, and begged to know



where she was ; but Westdale, with the power which a strong mind has upon a childish one, induced them by comforting words to drink some milk and to leave off crying. "Be quiet, like dear good children, and I will come again and see you in the morning," he said, as he left the room ; and the little ones, to whom he seemed like some messenger of peace they had heard of in Bible stories, lay down as they were told. Ah, how beautiful is the mind of the innocent child ! It feels no doubt acutely ; but let the voice of peace be whispered ; let the soothing hand be offered, and the pain be lulled ; and then, like rain descending on the fruitful ground, the troubled spirit feels that full contentment which the Christian's soul should feel, when messages are sent in all their varied forms from heaven.

The poor mother at length recovered consciousness, and a little nourishment was successfully applied. She saw strange faces round the bed, and, wifelike, her first thought was for her husband.

“Who are these, dear Paul? They—are not —police—are they?” she gasped.

“No, dearest; they are friends—friends in our dire need. Take a little of this nourishment; do, do, to please me, Minnie.”

Friends in need! Then her prayers had found an answer; and her children might yet do well! Could she have known how this was brought about, she would, indeed, have marvelled; but the words were balm to her, and holding up her weak hands she tried to clasp them in her thankfulness.

Giving what advice they thought the best, and leaving Mrs. Peabody, with the blankets and hot water, to assist in the recovery of the sufferer, Westdale and Mr. Midass left the cottage. Sleek and comfortable as the latter had looked, Westdale had seen a tear coursing down his calm face, and liked him all the better for it.

“You have been kind and thoughtful, Mr. Midass,” he said, as they walked quietly home together; “who would have thought that such a

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commencement of disturbance would have ended in such a manner ? ”

“The history of those people must be full of interest, and may throw some light upon the construction of the human mind. I shall follow it up if I can do so without upsetting the nervous system,” said Mr. Midass ; “but I like to be calm. There comes no good by being in a hurry.”

“There is no good in needless bustle, if you mean that, Mr. Midass ; but then there are times when we must stir our stumps, and do so pretty quickly. Good-night,” he added, when they reached the Sluggard’s gate ; “I shall take my wife to see these poor creatures the first thing in the morning, and will report to you how they are ; good-night, good-night ;” and Westdale made the best of his way to Laurel Cottage.

## CHAPTER VII.

### IN CUT-THROAT LANE.

It has been said that Arthur Westdale was an artist; and what has been said was true; for he had gone through a course of art-instruction, and now he used the brush and palette as a means of livelihood. But although he did this, he was aware that he had attained to no great excellence, and therefore he still continued to draw in the Life School at South Kensington, and to attend other instruction which he thought might promote his advancement. Fond as he was of art, he knew that it was only by this course that he could attain to high proficiency; for he felt he was not one of those—who are rare—who climb the hill to

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fame without much toil. This being so—while he painted small and rapidly-executed subjects for his bread—he looked forward with steady hope to becoming a well-paid artist in after years. He knew that this painting for the “pot,” as it is sometimes called—would neither improve his reputation or his style; but what was he to do? He must increase his store by some means; and so he painted for the market works which his own knowledge, and the advice of dealers, pointed out as likely to sell best. On the morning following the events told in the foregoing chapter, he had to attend a life-model class at an early hour; but he felt he could not go to town, before he had paid a visit to the hut of the poor starving creatures he had so lately parted from. Before he had gone to sleep he had of course given his wife a sketch of what had taken place; but she had insisted that it should only be a sketch; reserving her anxiety for details until the morning. But to tell the truth, what Mrs. Westdale had heard was quite sufficient to banish sleep, and she passed the night

in planning and arranging how she might do good to those who so sorely stood in need of help.

There are few of us, perhaps, who have so little that they cannot do something, however small, for those in great necessity; and as she lay on her bed in the plain but comfortable little room, she turned over in her mind what articles of clothing she could spare to clothe her suffering sister. What could she take them to eat too? She could not give them an order on her butcher or her baker for joints and loaves. No, her means would not permit of that; but she could make them some nice broth. There were vegetables in the garden; and she would buy some shin of beef, as she believed it to be called, and would make something which would at least keep that wolf from the door which had almost got the mastery; and having arranged these details in her mind, she was up with the lark, and going about her household duties.

As soon as breakfast was over, Westdale started with his wife for the abode of destitution.

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“I am so anxious to see the poor things. There seems almost a romance about them, dreadful as the story is,” said the latter.

“It’s your romantic turn of mind, Janie. There is not much romance in the matter when you see it before your eyes.”

“Now you know you are just as romantic as I am, Arthur. Come, confess it dear. You wouldn’t be an artist if you hadn’t a little romance about you,” said Mrs. Westdale, her mind going back to the days of their courtship, and thinking of the meetings by the side of the stream when she lived in her mother’s cottage in Ireland.

“I wonder if the Sluggard is up yet; probably not,” said Westdale. “His constitution no doubt requires a good deal of sleep.”

“There he is on the steps, smoking his pipe. He seems as if he wanted to speak to us.”

Mrs. Westdale’s observation was a true one. The Sluggard did want to speak, and he held up his hand in token of his want. He was dressed as usual in his dressing-gown and red slippers, and as

he advanced, his robe, caught by the summer breeze, floated behind him in airy folds.

“You are going, no doubt, to see those poor people,” he said. “I am willing to assist them; but I must hear the man’s story before I do so to any extent. Be good enough to ask him to come here at his convenience; and if he chooses to tell me his story, I will aid him, if I can find a way to do so in a rational manner.”

“I am sure you will be kind to them, Mr. Slug——” Mrs. Westdale was on the point of saying “Mr. Sluggard,” when she corrected herself, and said “Mr. Midass.” “But we must go on as quickly as possible, for my husband has to get to town.”

“Well, do not let me detain you. Mr. Paul Lorrayne, I think he said his name was, will find me in my garden, in meditation, and enjoying the delights of intelligent repose.” And so saying, Mr. Midass turned himself about and sat upon the garden-bench.

When the Westdales reached the cottage,



Lorrayne came out to meet them, and the two little children were playing with a kitten, and enjoying that sun which shines alike upon the good and evil, upon the hungry and the overfed. The father looked at the visitors with the quiet respectful thankfulness which can only be shown and felt by those who are yet alive to the instincts of conscience.

“How is your wife this morning? Better, I hope. I am longing to see her and to do what little I can for her,” said Mrs. Westdale, with that kind and gentle sympathy of voice and manner which must have won a stony heart, much less the wounded suffering nature. Oh, what a gift it is, that power of voice and manner; how it pours balm into the weary heart, and bids the wretch lift up his thoughts, in hope that Heaven has not left him to despair! The tears streamed from Lorrayne’s eyes as he thanked the kind speaker, and asked her to gladden his poor wife by her welcome presence. At Westdale’s suggestion, his wife went alone into the cottage, while he remained outside and learnt something of the history of the family.

When Mrs. Westdale entered the little room, destitute as it was of comfort, she was indeed struck with what she saw there. Upon the bed, and propped up by some rude substitute for pillows, lay a delicate and refined-looking woman, upon whose pale and wasted features there was an exceeding beauty which hardship and starvation could not take away. The long fair hair was unconfined by fastenings, but it had been tenderly twisted by her husband's hands so as not to inconvenience her. There was a quiet look of patient firmness too, an uncomplaining fixedness of purpose, to bear what should be put upon her in the way of trial, which the least observing could not but have noticed. That she was of gentle blood no one could mistake; and to see such a one lying in this sad condition was enough to move the dullest mind to pity, and gentle goodness to almost consternation. Mrs. Westdale stood for a few moments speechless with astonishment, and as she did so her husband's narrative of the previous night's adventure passed through her mind again.

How must not this poor woman's partner in despair, have been struck with frenzy at the cruel sight which daily met his eyes! How must not his own sad state—his mind and body being all distraught by penury—have turned him to a madman! And then, as she stood looking on, she could not but think of her own little home—humble but peaceful though it was—and lift her soul in silent thankfulness, that her husband's care and prudence managed his slender means with so much forethought.

But of course it would not do to be standing and staring at the figure on the bed, although she could have pondered on the sight before her some time longer; so she drew nearer and took the hand of the sufferer. "I have come to see if I can assist you, dear," she said; more and more surprised that ghastly Want should have dared to lay his iron hand on such a victim. "You must have suffered much; but by the grace of God, better days are, I hope, in store for you."

"Thank you—thank you," said the sufferer, in

that low and hollow voice which shows the exhaustion of the body; "my children—will you call them to me? I would recommend them to your kindness. If Heaven has sent you as a friend, oh, may you be a friend—to——" The sentence was not finished, for the voice which sought to utter it was still; the speaker had fainted.

Mrs. Westdale had brought restoratives, and applied them with so much success as to quickly restore the poor invalid; and, having done this, she insisted upon her taking a little of the milk which she had also brought; and then, sitting down by the bed, occupied herself with words of comfort. "Your children are playing in the sun; poor little dears, they do not seem unhappy, though no doubt their little minds must be dwelling, in childhood's careless manner, on your sad condition."

"They have had some milk and bread, my husband tells me—you or some kind friend has sent it—thank you so very much."

"Do not talk; I will do that. And let me tell you, dear, that though I am in a very humble

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sphere of life, I will busy myself, and so will my kind husband, to bring about a better state of things. We cannot see the wisdom of these things; how should we, being so blind and full of worldly care? But believe me, the Power which has suffered you to fall so low, has equal power to raise you up again, and may do so much sooner than you think for. At all events try and be easy for the present; for I can promise to ease your pressing wants for some short time to come, and to do what I can to help you."

It was with such kind expressions that Mrs. Westdale poured the oil and wine of sympathy and consolation into the wounds which were so much in want of them; and while she sat beside the bed, her husband had some conversation with the man outside.

"Of course my wife and myself feel it our bounden duty," said Westdale, "to give assistance in such a case as this; but I should be glad to hear something about your former life. If I am to do much for you I shall have to apply

to others, and I wish to be able to see my way clear."

"I will give you the fullest information of all that concerns myself. I have never done a dishonest action, or have I ever attempted one—except of course my miserable attempt last night to demand assistance; but the way I tried to——"

"We will let that pass," said Westdale; "a man whose griefs are so calamitous as yours may well do desperate acts. You said something last night about being a patentee. Did you mean that an unsuccessful attempt to work a patent had been your ruin?"

"Let me give you a short sketch of my life. I will not detain you beyond a few minutes; and if I am not very connected you must kindly make allowances, for my head is apt to wander from bodily weakness," said Lorryne, seating himself upon the only thing at hand to bear him—an old inverted garden-pot, while, with folded arms, Westdale leaned against the doorpost.

“Go on then, and be as brief as possible,” said the latter.

Paul Lorrayne here gave Westdale an outline of his history, and ended by telling how he had incurred his uncle’s anger and had been refused assistance by him.

“You have given him no real cause for his dislike?” asked Westdale.

“None but what I am going to tell you of. I have a taste for mechanics, and some knowledge of chemistry; and I have, amongst other things, hit upon a plan which, if it could be successfully worked out, would benefit the world. I have patented my invention, and this has been the cause of my ruin.”

“You are not the only one whose inventions, or supposed inventions, have led to disaster,” said Westdale.

“Ah, mine is no supposed invention; it is as sure as the ruin about me; nothing can be more certain.”

“Pray go on.”

“My patent is this, sir: to make bricks without burning them with fire. It is a certainty; but of course I cannot explain the matter to you now—you would not care to listen to me.”

“About your uncle and his cause of offence?” said Westdale.

“I submitted my invention to my uncle, hoping for his assistance. He is a proud man, whose mind runs in a groove, and whose world is his estate. Anything outside it he has no sympathy for; and in his ignorance he condemned my invention altogether. I pressed him to assist me by his moral support; but he replied by warning me, that if I spent my money upon what he was pleased to call ‘tomfoolery,’ I must not hope to recoup myself through him.”

“And you treated his advice with indifference?” said Westdale, thinking the uncle was probably in the right.

“I could not give up my valuable invention to please an obstinate old man. And it was dear to me for another reason. I met the dear and



precious creature who lies upon the wretched bed inside ; and to know her was, of course, to love her."

" Ah ! " almost groaned Westdale, for he could guess the sequel ; " and while you were almost destitute you could not stay your inclinations, but took a wife to share your hopeless fortunes ! "

" Hopeless, sir ? They were the most brilliant—are the most brilliant still—if only I could have a little of the money which lies unused and useless in the hands of thousands."

" Go on," said Westdale, who was beginning to feel something like contempt for the enthusiast, although he felt that he himself had married on what was but a shallow pittance ; " go on, and let me know about your uncle."

" Feeling sure of success, I took a patent out, and in trying to work it I have long ago spent every farthing which I had. I have applied to my uncle for assistance, but quite in vain. He replied to my first letter, saying that he ' knew how it would be,' and that he would have nothing to

do with such a 'pig-headed fool'—to use his own expression—as I was. I have told him I was starving. He replied that 'it served me right.' I applied to him for work—to be allowed for a few shillings weekly to labour in his garden, for no one else would take me; but his reply was that I had made my bed, and must lie on it."

"I will write to him," said Westdale.

"It will be useless, sir. I have written dozens of letters to him, and no notice has been taken of them, or ever will be."

"I will write to him," said Westdale again; "what is his address?"

"His name is Charles Lorraine, Woodleigh Park, near Gloucester."

"Then I will write to him. Perhaps a statement from a stranger may at least induce him to make inquiries."

"I will hope so, although hope has died out within me. For their sakes I will suffer my uncle's further contemptuous slighting, and I hardly know that I can blame him. It is the

way of the world. If the rich man's counsel is not taken, the poor man must be content to bear his anger. The world sees little good in being rich, if it cannot trample on those who have no money."

"Well, we will not go into sophistical argument; we will apply to him again, and I will state your sad position. In the meantime I will try and get assistance in the neighbourhood. You are in rags, and will not therefore be too proud to wear some old clothes of my own?"

"Proud!" said the poor man, looking up with that earnest expression which comes to those whose thoughts are sad and deep; "what have I to do with pride? No; I would go barefoot and lick the dust before the feet of strangers if I but knew how to benefit my fortunes."

"And yet you have just given an instance of your pride; you would not ask your uncle any more from anger at his former treatment."

"I am not proud, it is not pride which holds me back, it is cowardice. I am brought so low—

so very low—in mind and body, that I dare not act with manly vigour. Think of me last night, prowling like the stealthy beast which haunts the forest! How could I have acted so if my poor brain had not been wandering, and pride and courage had not left me?”

“Well, don’t refer to that again at present; it is an unpleasant subject, and will not help us now. The man whose premises you entered wishes to see you with a view to help.”

“Ah, he was here last night. We cannot see the ways of Providence,” said the poor fellow, something of his former faith returning for the moment. “Who knows but I was led by some good angel to plead my wretchedness in that strange way. I was always sanguine; and even now something like hope almost begins to light my weary soul; but if help should be too late, if she, my wife—that angel of uncomplaining faith and gentleness—should sink, my knell will then indeed have struck, for nothing would support me.”

“Your wife shall be cared for—that I promise you; and your children shall not want. I will now go home and look out a few clothes, and you can follow me in a quarter of an hour. I will speak to my wife a moment before I leave.” And Westdale, stepping upon the threshold, called her softly.

“Come in a moment, Arthur. The sight of your firm face may do more to reassure Mrs. Lorrayne than I can do; come in and clasp her hand in sympathy a moment. Look at him, dear,” she added to the languid woman; “he has strength and willingness to help you. We will both do what we can, we will indeed!”

Mrs. Lorrayne turned her wistful glance upon Westdale’s face, in that way which only the refined and educated can acquire.

“Thank you, sir,” she said; “my two children—if I should not survive—your goodness will extend to them—will it not?”

A little care will soon set you up again,” said Westdale, with that quiet heartiness which sustains

the weak. "I am now going to make some few arrangements. I shall go on to town," he added to his wife. "I shall return at the usual hour;" and, leaving the cottage, he retraced his steps to his own home.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### THE DAWN OF HOPE.

As Westdale passed Salisbury House on his way to Laurel Cottage, he stopped to tell the Sluggard that the poor patentee would call upon him in the course of the morning, and then he hurried on to see what he could look out from his own well-worn raiment to suit the needs of his *protégé*. Even to the careful and least extravagant, old clothes will accumulate. Garments cannot be worn year after year without making some slight change, otherwise the little world in which a man may chance to live would know him by the same old coat; so that, even if a suit is not quite done for, he may place it on one side, and, although he may grudge the

outlay, spend his scanty means on something new. It was thus with Westdale. He always chose good wearing cloth, and by the aid of the brush his clothing served him well; but he had to make his way, and his common sense told him there was nothing got by looking shabby.

It chanced, therefore, that when he went into the room he used for dressing, and looked over his stock, he was able to lay his hand upon a suit of well-worn, sober-coloured clothes, which would make the ragged patentee quite smart.

“Yes,” thought Westdale, “he is a tall fellow, and this old gray suit will be all right for length; but it will look fearfully baggy. Never mind, he will appear all the more interesting. Yes, the old gray suit for him. And then these old shirts—the fronts are worn out, no doubt; but they are clean and comfortable, and will hold a collar. He will look quite a swell after his rags, poor creature!”

While suchlike charitable thoughts and feelings were occupying him, Westdale did not hear the low knock at the entrance-door, or he would



have hurried down to open it himself to his expected visitor ; but the quick-eared little Margaret heard it, and, with the baby in her arms, she promptly answered to the summons.

With an instinctive and natural dislike to tramps and beggars, the girl looked at Lorrayne—for it was he—and then, with a civil but firm “ We have got nothing for you,” shut the door in his face. Westdale, however, who at the moment was examining the soles and heels and cracks of certain well-worn shoes, to see what he could spare, heard the slamming of the door, and shrewdly guessing at the reason, called out to know who was there.

“ It’s only a beggar, sir,” said the satisfied Margaret, feeling how rightly she had acted ; “ I told him there was nothing for him, sir. Nor more there was,” she added to the baby-girl, who would gladly have held some converse with “ the beggar.”

“ Call him back ; I want to see him,” said Westdale, turning over the dusty and uninviting-looking shoes as quickly as possible.

Thus instructed the useful Margaret opened the door again, and to her surprise the man needed no calling back, for he was standing before the door as when she shut it.

“Oh, you’re there, are you? Well, you can stop; master wants you,” she said; while the little one held out her arms, and tried to attract the notice of the ragged man.

“Take baby out into the garden, Margaret,” said Westdale, coming down the steep staircase with a bundle of clothes on his arm. “Walk in here,” he added to Lorryne, who with downcast look was waiting patiently. “I have looked you out a few things, which I hope will be of service. You can go into the kitchen and try them on. I will wait here for you.”

The change was soon effected, and when Lorryne stood in the sober gray tweed—which although loose for him was not otherwise a bad fit—he felt a thrill almost of pleasure passing through him. The shoes too; should he have equal luck with them? Would they too fit him?

Yes, they were a fair fit ; and opening the kitchen-door he stepped out into the passage.

“That’s better,” said Westdale. “Now let me see. Your hat is none of the best ; try this one. A little too large, perhaps ; but a slip or two of paper will alter that. Here is an old newspaper ; you can cut some strips.”

“Your kindness is very great, Mr. Westdale,” said the poor patentee, who, now that he looked respectable, began to feel so. “It seems unlikely *now*, but if ever I can serve you, if ever I can in future times do anything that may cause you benefit, I shall look back upon the past few hours, and think no sacrifice too great for those whose goodness has been so very noble.”

“Say nothing about that,” said Westdale, who had not made his mind up as to how much of the other’s story might be true. “It is each man’s duty to help his fellow-man ; and there is no doubt about your sad condition. As to your former life, I have no proof to verify your statement, and I cannot take it all as granted. I may tell you this

without insulting you ; and if a time should come when all you say can be, and is, proved strictly fact, I shall owe you my apology. In the meantime accept this trifle as a loan," and taking from his purse a small sum to supply immediate wants, Westdale prepared to start for London.

"Of course I cannot refuse your bounty, sir," said the other ; standing more erect now that he was better clad ; "but although it may seem boastful, I believe a time will come when my patent——"

"Well, we will talk about the patent another time," said Westdale, with some slight show of impatience, for he was somewhat sceptical of patents. "I must now go to London, and you had better call at once on Mr. Midass."

"You think I may dare to do so, Mr. Westdale ? He may be kind, and is so, but he is not such as you are ; he is of another class."

"It is enough that he has expressed a wish to see you, I should think ; but he is a man who is not likely to reproach you or anyone else. If he

wishes to see you, it is for your welfare doubtless."

"I will go at once. Thanks to your kindness, I am hardly likely to be recognised by his maid-servant; and hope seems springing up within me." And with his head held more erect, Paul Lorrayne walked down the garden-path and crossed the road to Salisbury House.

Margaret and the baby, as they saw him walking down the garden-path, recognised perhaps the gray tweed suit and the felt hat, for both mistook him. The little maid-of-all-work thought for the moment that master was going out and leaving the beggarman in the kitchen, whilst the baby, stretching out its tiny arms, called loudly, "Papa! papa!" and cried to think that he who never left the house without a hearty kiss should turn his back apparently so coldly.

Margaret, however, soon discovered the mistake, and satisfied the little one that "papa" was still indoors, and would kiss his baby-girl as usual.

As he made his exit, Lorrayne had heard the

cry and marked its import. Yes, the little child had taken him to be her father. To the eye of infancy he had seemed to be "a gentleman."

Happy omen! Not for himself alone, but chiefly for his wife, who was so true a lady, did his hope burn within him. Yes, the lane might have at last a turning; and then, with care and patience, who could tell whither it might lead? Perhaps the march of intellect would show to men how sound his patent was. Perhaps the all unseen which shapes our course, was yet preparing easy lines both for himself and those he loved. However it might be, a spring of hope seemed bubbling up within him, like water at the bottom of a well.

## CHAPTER IX.

### AT WOODLEIGH PARK.

IN the comfortable breakfast-room of a fine old mansion, which, with the broad acres of undulating grass-land, was known as Woodleigh Park, sat an old lady and gentleman. They were a goodly pair to look at, for such a handsome couple at their time of life would not be easy to pick out. But although their looks were brave, there was a marked and striking contrast in the character of feature.

The old man's face was of that kind which, while it looked intelligent and quick, seemed as if obstinacy, weakness, and pride made up the mind within. His colour was a florid one, not of that hue which comes upon a man who takes large doses

of port-wine or brandy; but the tone was that of healthy and nervous quickness, of a nature susceptible to hot and angry temper, and also to generosity and kindness.

Any shrewd observer of the human face, however, taking his appearance generally, would probably come to the conclusion that this fine-looking old gentleman was "pig-headed," and that if he happened to be contradicted or have his will disputed, he could make himself very disagreeable indeed.

To save uncertainty on this point, it may as well be told that the "shrewd observer" would have been quite right; for with all his fine appearance and his general good-temper, the old man was as perverse and pig-headed as he well could be.

His wife was different. The face of Mrs. Lorrayne—for her husband was Mr. Charles Lorrayne, whose address had been given to Arthur Westdale—was very pale, and her expression grave and quiet. She looked too as though she might, when young, have been both soft and yielding;



but now, the "shrewd observer" might have noticed, as she looked from time to time towards her husband, that in the eye and mouth there was both firmness and decision, as though she was often called upon to keep him within the bounds of order.

So firm indeed was her mouth and eye at times, that it might be doubted whether the constant living with a self-willed husband had not gone some way to make her self-willed also; but however this may be, Mrs. Lorraine was firm and constant in her views, and seldom changed her mind when once she made it up.

As has been said, the pair were sitting in the breakfast-room at Woodleigh Park, and breakfast was arranged upon the table.

The window was open, for the weather was delightful. It was early summer, and the view over the well-mown lawn, and the richly-timbered park beyond, was indeed inviting. There is no portion of the day perhaps when men and women, who live in ease and comfort, and whose health is

good, feel more satisfied with life than at the breakfast-hour.

Refreshed by sleep, the mind is vigorous for new impressions; and, braced by the morning bath, the body is renewed in nervous energy; so that intellectual and substantial food are alike partaken of with satisfaction.

Who does not feel, as the pale light of morning dawns upon him—or upon her for that matter—some sentiment of hope, some sense of restoration? The wretch who has the toothache, and has had but little sleep all night, thinks, as he sees the dawn, that now perhaps a change will come about. The speculator whose securities have fallen, and whose dreams have troubled him, hopes that in the coming day things may be altered. Well might the ancient poet sing, “My strength is renewed as the morning,” for with returning day there is, and always will be, hope and vigour.

No doubt there are exceptions. The criminal whose life is forfeited, and who hears the heavy tread outside his cell which mark the hangman’s

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coming, feels doubtless that the morning brings him death, snatches away the faint fond hope of respite and reprieve, and gives him up to darkness and despair. But yet who knows? The busy fingers of the man who binds his body, and whose creeping touch seems almost to find pleasure in the duty, may tear the earthly dross from out his soul, and the poor creature, looking upward in his full repentance, may see a pardoning hand held out to help him ere he sinks like Peter in the drowning wave.

The dying Christian too—he knows his little strength is going; he cannot look for vigour! No, he cannot look for this; but still his hope remains. Stronger and stronger, louder and louder yet, the voice of comfort hails him, and bids him know that the attendant angels hover near.

But to return to the pleasant breakfast-table at Woodleigh Park. With all his somewhat fussy satisfaction, Mr. Lorrayne found something wanting; and what that something was his wife

knew very well. It was the arrival of the postman who had to come some distance.

“I shall have to complain about that fellow ; his time of coming gets more and more uncertain,” said Mr. Lorrayne, looking critically at the toast to see if he could find some fault with it.

“He has a long way to come, and he does not get any younger, you know,” said his wife.

“I am quite aware of that, Nancy ; but that’s no reason why we should be kept waiting. If he can’t walk, they ought to let him have a cart. How he can carry all the parcels quite beats me !”

“Or a donkey, perhaps, would be sufficient,” said Mrs. Lorrayne ; who thought the figure of the old man, sitting upon a quiet ass, would be a pleasant feature in the landscape.

“He gossips with everyone, I suppose. I do hate people who are always gossiping. I don’t think Mrs. Parsons fries the bacon quite so well as she did,” added the old man, holding up a beautifully-curved morsel on his fork.

Mrs. Lorrayne glanced at the bacon, but being

quite unable to find fault with it in common candour, said nothing.

“ We haven’t heard from Gerard a long time ; I wonder at that, for he must be getting short of money. Do you recollect the amount of the last cheque he had, Nancy ? ”

“ Yes ; I wrote it out myself, and you signed it. I wrote the letter too, for you said your hand was unsteady that day, and you asked me to write for you.”

“ Ah, you’re right, as you always are, Nancy,” said the gay old gentleman, with a good-humoured smile. “ The cheque was three hundred, I think, or was it three hundred and fifty ? ”

“ The cheque was for five hundred pounds, Charles. Gerard’s letter mentioned between four and five hundred, and you said it had better be even money, and so you told me to fill in the cheque for five hundred.”

“ Was it so much ? Well, Gerard is a very good boy, and likely to be a credit to his position

when he comes to it, but we mustn't let him have too much."

"No," said Mrs. Lorrayne gravely, for she thought her nephew Gerard spent a great deal too much money in sheer idleness and pleasure. "I almost wish he would take to some other profession; it seems so dreadful for a man to waste his life in pleasure, or what he thinks is pleasure."

"I never had any profession, I never did anything, Nancy," said the old man, with some slight look of discontent upon his healthy face.

"No, Charles; but you came into the property very young, otherwise I am sure you would have worked, and shown the world how clever you are."

"Thank you, Nancy, thank you," said Mr. Lorrayne, laughing gaily—for he dearly liked a little flattery from his wife; "but don't I show my talents in the way I manage the land, and as a magistrate? I fancy the bench would be all adrift without me."

Mrs. Lorrayne said nothing, for she really didn't know what to say ; but from what she had heard of her husband's doings, she was inclined to think that his brother-magistrates would have gladly dispensed with him on more than one occasion. However, there was no occasion for her to explain her thoughts, for the butler now entered the room with the letters, and each recipient became engrossed.

When a number of letters are put into our hands, before opening them the eye runs generally over the directions, to see if the well-known hand of someone whom we love, or who is likely to give us looked-for information, is upon any of them.

It was so with the Lorraynes. Each could tell, by the feel of the paper, the style of writing, and sundry other little tokens, that some of the documents were but ordinary bills or circulars from people quite devoid of interest to them. But besides these, each one had a letter from a writer in whom they had the deepest interest.

In opening letters, there are different ways of doing it. Some persons—and these are generally impetuous by nature—tear open those which promise interest, while others coolly and neatly break the covers of the uninviting looking, and keep the best until the last. And how like children are we all! Go into a nursery or a dining-room when a number of young children are being helped to food, and where it is expected they will eat what is before them, and you may notice the different way in which each one sets about it. Some will daintily pick out what they think is nicest, and leave it for the last; so that when their appetites begin to flag, the palate may be tickled with what they like the best. Others will leave the fat or crust, and eat the meat or jam, regardless of the rest; while a few take a middle course, and eat the jam and crust together, if they are forced by unrelenting parents to eat what they don't like, on the ground that it is wasteful not to do so. These latter children are the wisest; but give them their free will, and it will mostly happen



that they make selection of some sort. And it is very much the same with the recipients of letters. But however this may be, Mrs. Lorrayne opened the uninviting first, and after quietly reading them, replaced them in the covers before she touched the one she longed to read.

Not so her husband. This impulsive gentleman tossed aside the bill-like-looking documents, and broke the envelope of a letter which was from Gerard Lorrayne, his nephew and heir.

There is character in everything we do almost, and there certainly was as great a contrast in the way these two good people read their letters, as in the manner they had selected them for reading. Mrs. Lorrayne's matter for special interest was in a long epistle from a niece who lived with them, and who was an adopted daughter. To see the reader of this young lady's letter quietly perusing the closely-written lines, showed how great was the constraint which she could put upon herself; for except a certain grave sadness on her features, there was nothing to

show that she was moved. But yet she was so to a great degree; for the news it gave her recalled the spring-time of her life, and many of those maiden hopes and fears which once had stirred her heart.

Mr. Lorrayne, on the contrary, in reading through his nephew's letter, gave way to all the natural impulse of his nature. He gave short laughs, and struck the letter with his open hand in his great interest. Then he would put the letter down a moment, allow his glasses to fall upon his waistcoat, and passing his hand over his smooth and healthy face, give way to thought.

"This is from Gerard," he said, holding the letter towards his wife; "he wants more money. Ha! ha! It's impossible to grudge him anything. But this sort of thing mustn't go on—it mustn't indeed."

"It is very sad that he should be so extravagant; it is only the other day that he had five hundred pounds," said Mrs. Lorrayne, taking the proffered letter.

“Yes, Nancy; and what with the badness of the times and my heavy losses through the breaking of Shalford’s bank, ready money isn’t very plentiful just now.”

“It seems to me so dreadful that money should be squandered, tossed about in any reckless manner when so many sad cases come upon one’s notice,” was the very truthful observation of Mrs. Lorrayne.

Her husband, however, took no immediate notice of it, for he had opened a letter in a stranger’s hand, and seemed at once both interested and angry.

“How different people are,” continued Mrs. Lorrayne, partly to herself and partly to her husband, if he chose to listen. “Now Paul was always so different to Gerard; he——”

“What’s that you were saying, Nancy? Squandering money or something?”

“I was saying that it was dreadful to waste money as dear Gerard does, when there is so much misery in the world. And then I was thinking how different poor Paul was to Gerard. He wasted

his money, perhaps; but not in the same reckless way."

"This letter is about that blockhead Paul. It's a begging-letter, I suppose; from a stranger too. Just like that blockhead's impudence! He is ashamed to write himself after his folly, so he gets a man, who is a perfect stranger to me, to do so for him. Did you ever know such impudence?"

"He could hardly write to you himself, Charles, after your last refusal for help."

"Yes; help, help, help. He chose to throw away his money on his stupid idiotic patent, notwithstanding my warning; and then it's money, money, money! No; I told him I wouldn't let him have a shilling if he went against my judgment, and he must take the consequences. What I say I always adhere to, as the people down here know very well. It is the only way to keep matters straight."

Mrs. Lorrayne said nothing, for she knew it was useless; but if he had not been so much

absorbed by his own sense of importance and the matter of his letters, her husband would have noticed that she sighed, and that the grave look upon her face was graver than usual.

The letter in the stranger's hand, and which had reference to the Paul they had been talking of, was from Arthur Westdale, who, as he said he should, had lost no time in writing of the poor Lorraines, whose sad condition called for so much pity. When he had put his pen to paper, to give the rich proprietor of Woodleigh Park some knowledge of the dire need of the poor nephew, his mind had not been very sanguine, for his knowledge of the world forbade his being so. He had not told the patentee his doubts—and for that matter there was no occasion—for the poor creature had no hope whatever of help from such a source; but Westdale thought that if a stranger wrote, although it might cause some anger, it might also force investigation, and shame the rich relation into doing something. He had, therefore, when his wife had gone to bed—for

he thought his pipe would be his best assistant—taken his writing materials to the cozy little kitchen, and had put on paper the following words :

“LAUREL COTTAGE, WINDSLOW :

“June 21st, 1873.

“SIR,

“It has recently come to my knowledge that a family in my own neighbourhood is in the greatest want, and without the power to help themselves.

“Their position is a very sad one, and may well draw upon that pity which I hope we all possess. The family consists of four, two of whom are young children, and although these are fairly nourished, it is only at the cost of the almost absolute starvation of the parents ; indeed, but for my discovery of the mother’s state, she would have sunk from want within a very few hours. My wife and myself are doing, and will continue to do, what little we can ; but I write

to you, feeling that you have only to know the facts to give your aid.

“The young man states his name to be Paul Lorrayne, and also that you are his uncle, and the only relative who can give him help.

“It seems, from what he tells me, that he has acted contrary to your advice and warning, and this may be so; but from his story, his struggles for advancement have been very great, and his money has not, at all events, been spent in idleness or pleasure.

“Broken in mind and body as the poor man is, he has not the spirit to apply to you again for some assistance. I therefore think it right to let you know how truly destitute he is; and if he really is your nephew, as he says, I cannot doubt that you will thank me for giving you this information.

“As I am a perfect stranger to you, I give you as references Messrs. Fox and Co., of London, who knew me many years, during the time I held Her Majesty’s commission, and also Joseph

Wynford, R.A., the well-known painter, who has been my friend since I have left the Service.

“My reason for giving you these references is, that you may ascertain that my assertions may be trusted; and in the hope that you may quickly put them to the test, and give your help;

“I am, Sir,

“Your most obedient Servant,

“ARTHUR WESTDALE.

“To Charles Lorrayne, Esq.,

“Woodleigh Park.”

When Mr. Lorrayne had finished the reading of this letter, his face lost its merry sanguine look, and a surly frown had settled there instead.

“You recollect what I told him time after time, Nancy. I said he was pitching his money to the dogs; and what did he do? Why, he *did* pitch it to the dogs. I didn't tell him once, but I told him a hundred times, that he was a blockhead to fancy himself cleverer than other people, and he coolly went and did exactly the opposite of



what I told him. Now does such a fellow as that deserve any help? I just ask you whether he does or whether he doesn't? Pshaw!" said the old man, starting from his chair and stamping about the room in a violent passion; "I said I wouldn't encourage such obstinacy, and I won't; I'll be hanged if I do. The idiot has thrown away his money, and he may starve for all I care; he may indeed."

"Poor fellow!" said Mrs. Lorrayne, with her hand upon the letter; "he was so very sanguine. He seemed to think he should benefit you, Charles, as well as himself."

"Yes, it drives me almost mad to think of his impudence; disregards my positive warning and advice, and tells me he does it for my good—*my* good, mark you. I'm a nice sort of person to have good done to me by a blockhead like that."

"We are all liable to throw away good advice at times. Don't you remember, Charles, how strongly Mr. Puttyford recommended you not to

keep so much money in Shalford and Co.'s bank, and how persistent you were, and lost your money in consequence?"

"What's that got to do with it? A man in my position is not to be advised and dictated to like a child. When I am Mr. Paul, and Mr. Paul is me, I will sing a different tune."

Mrs. Lorraine knew that arguing was no use, and therefore she was silent; but there was something in the stranger's letter that made her sad; for there was, to her thinking, a kindly force about it which told how true were its contents.

"I have always said that Paul might starve, and starve he shall. Serve him right. Fellows who undertake to make bricks without fire deserve to starve for their impudence."

"No," said Mrs. Lorraine; who thought she might throw oil upon the troubled waters, by agreeing with her husband in some measure. "No; I suppose the thing would be impossible; just as the children of Israel could not make bricks without straw."

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“What’s that?” said the old man, confronting his wife with a very red face, for he thought there was hidden satire in her words. “If you think I’m like Pharaoh, and want that fellow to make bricks in any way at all, you’re mistaken. Making bricks would be highly improper for a man bearing his name. Making bricks indeed! He had better enlist as a soldier. But whatever he does, I won’t help him, whatever that man may say. Westdale he signs himself, doesn’t he?”

“Arthur Westdale is the signature, Charles. Shall I answer it, dear?”

“No; I’ll answer it, and I’ll do so at once. Look at that rabbit eating the pinks! I told Simmons to destroy all the rabbits.” And Mr. Lorrayne, whose thoughts were easily diverted, bounced out of the room, to hunt away the rabbit and to scold the gardener.

## CHAPTER X

### OBSTINACY AND COMPASSION.

MR. LORRAYNE had said that he would answer Westdale's letter ; and so soon as he had seen the head-gardener, and asked him why his orders had not been carried out for the destruction of the rabbits, he proceeded to carry out his purpose, and to show that—like the laws of the Medes and Persians—his threats and orders did not vary.

It was his custom to smoke a cigarette or two after his breakfast, and he now walked up and down the terrace, gay with sweet flowers on each hand, to think how trenchant he could make his

letter. The morning air was so balmy and his health so good, that he felt buoyant in his spirit, and everything about him seemed to convey a sense of his importance.

He was "monarch of all he surveyed," at least for his life, and there was no one on the property would dare dispute his orders. The very cuckoo seemed to sing on sufferance; for if the bird sang too loudly or too often he would have it fired at, and make it shift its quarters. The busy gardeners, as they mowed the distant lawn, feared lest the noise of the machine might vex their lord and master, and plied the oil-can freely; and if one of them perchance must pass him, the hat-touching was of a very humble character.

Mr. Lorrayne, with all his importance and strictness, was by no means unpopular with his dependents; on the other hand, his very faults and failings were liked. For, though "he pitched into them" on every slight occasion, he was generous and open-handed; and the way he domineered over his neighbours caused them much diversion.

Yes, he was a thorough despot; and like all despots who have nearly everything their own way, he was very much averse to opposition.

“It never does to be weak,” he said to himself, stopping in his walk to cut a choice rosebud for his coat; “my position as head of the family does not allow me to encourage perversity and reckless conceit and vanity. Paul was always a conceited jackass. He goes and marries on the empty chance of his crack-brained patent making him a fortune; and now, because it hasn’t, and because in spite of my repeated warnings he finds himself pinched, he gets a fellow who says he has been in the Army—some assistant-surgeon probably—to write what he thinks is a pathetic letter. No; I don’t like to be uncharitable, but I believe it my duty to be firm, and act on principle. I have always acted upon principle, and I always will. And with suchlike vain excuses, the old man marched off to his study to answer Westdale’s letter. He was not a very subtle pen-

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man, and it took him some time to compose the following words :

“ WOODLEIGH PARK : June 22nd, 1873.

“ SIR,

“ I beg to acknowledge your letter. Your information as to Mr. Paul Lorrayne’s behaviour to myself is correct, and this being so, you will not think the less of me that I decline to help a man who would not help himself; or to go from my word that I would render no assistance to one who has not only done nothing, but has actually taken the very course which I, as head of the family, felt it to be my duty to forbid.

“ There is only one way of treating such persons, namely, to let them suffer for their pains. If, as you say, you have his welfare at heart, you had better assist him to get work, and, when he has got it, to be diligent. I am willing to make this concession. If, at the end of six months, I hear that his time has been profitably and industriously spent, and that his employers are satis-

fied with him, I will do something towards the education of his children ; but beyond this I cannot go.

“ I am, Sir,

“ Your very obedient Servant,

“ CHARLES LORRAYNE.

“ Arthur Westdale, Esq.,

“ Laurel Cottage.”

When this precious document was penned, Mr. Lorrayne thought that upon the whole he had done something which was very clever ; and therefore, although his conscience was not quite at ease, he ordered his cob and rode to his farm buildings.

While he is inspecting the fattening-stock and talking over two or three parish matters with his bailiff, his wife is at work upon a letter, and as she writes it her woman's tears fall fast upon the paper. She loved her husband. She knew him to be generous and open-handed ; but she knew his stubborn pride, his childish obstinacy. Could he, oh, could he have the heart to ride so gaily to his



farm, when such a tale of suffering had been sent to him? Could his dead brother's son and children want for bread, or the poor mother lie in suffering, and his heart be closed? How could the love of Christ dwell in him? Had all his early teachings gone for nothing? Were all the scripture precepts which he knew but empty phrases? Oh, it was grievous, it was very sad! And laying down her pen, the poor lady broke into a flood of tears, and moaned for very sorrow. What could she do? She had heard that Paul Lorraine's wife was beautiful and good; that she was of gentle blood and education, and that she had married very imprudently; for she had absolutely nothing of her own, and had no friends to look to. Could she blame her because of this imprudent marriage? She could pity her, but she could hardly blame her very deeply; for what do young girls know of prudence? If they are so fortunate as to meet with one who loves them, and who they can love, surely, they think, just Heaven will do the rest, and give

them food and clothing. No; Mrs. Lorrayne could look in pity on the weakness of woman and the selfishness of man, but in her heart of hearts she could not blame them much; for is not love,—that tender unison of heart and heart,—if it can last unchecked by anxious care but for a year or two, worth living for? The heart that knows not love, and beats through life without the knowing it, has it not beat in vain so far as happiness is reckoned? As Mrs. Lorrayne pondered on these things she thought it was so; and this in truth had always been her feeling.

She herself had been a portionless young girl, when her Charles had proposed to her; but would she not have loved him just the same if, like poor Paul, his all had been some trifling sum of money and a patent? She felt it was so. She felt, too, that though she had married wealth and station, and had the constant love of him who owned her, she could, if it were possible to start afresh, change places with her

husband's luckless relatives. Black care, no doubt, had settled on them for the time; but even in black care there is a grim excitement, and care might swiftly vanish. And then they had been blessed with children; in whom, as years rolled by them, they could live again; while she had never had these heavenly gifts; and consequently there was something wanting to her life.

Ah, how true it is that riches do not make us happy! Nothing but love, as centred in our own belongings, can give us happiness; we must both love and know that we are loved, before the nearest point of happiness is reached.

When Mrs. Lorrayne had been relieved by that resource to woman, a good cry, she set about thinking how she could lend assistance. She had no pin-money, for, having married very young, and before her husband had come into his property, he was in no position at the time to make a settlement; and, as has been told, she had no money of her own; so that beyond a few

pounds she had nothing at command. She felt, too, that instinct of a pure conscience which dislikes a secret action; and although she frequently differed from her husband, she had always endeavoured to carry out his wishes. But, if this Mr. Westdale's story was to be believed—and she had no doubt on that point—she must now take separate action. What should she do? She would do as she had always done when doubt assailed her; she would ask for counsel from that throne on high, where her many many urgent prayers for guidance had been offered. Rising refreshed and calmed, she penned the following lines :

“WOODLEIGH : June 23rd, 1873.

“DEAR SIR,

“My husband has shown me your letter, and although he cannot send money to Mr. Paul Lorraine, I have determined to enclose a small sum to relieve his pressing necessity.

“I will also write to a friend—a sister of mercy—who will, I feel sure, take an early opportunity of visiting this distressed family;

and as you did not send their address I shall refer her to yourself, when, perhaps, you will have the goodness to give her their direction.

“In this lady the poor wife and mother will find an active friend, and, if need be, a clever nurse; and she will convey to me any further particulars of this sad history.

“The enclosed note for five pounds I shall be glad if you will give at once to Mr. Paul Lorrayne, and to assure both himself and his wife of the sympathy of

“Yours faithfully,

“ANNE LORRAYNE.

“Arthur Westdale, Esq.”

When Mrs. Lorrayne had written this letter and enclosed the money, she wrote another to her friend, the kind lady, who belonged to a little band of heroines who pass their lives in active charity; and when she had done this she felt almost light at heart, for it was ensuring help for those whose succour she was bent on.

This second letter being written, she determined to enjoy the morning air, and putting on her shady hat she sallied forth. Oh, how delightful it all was! How bounteous was heaven! Perhaps the flowers looked brighter to her eyes because her pity's tears had washed them. Perhaps the sympathy which stirred her soul attuned her thoughts to nature's harmony. Whatever was the cause, this hour in leafy June was long remembered.

## CHAPTER XI.

### GERARD AND ETHEL LORRAYNE.

THE Gerard and the Ethel spoken of in the last chapter were the son and daughter of Mr. Lorrayne's third brother, who, like Paul's father, had died young, and had left his children without provision. On being left orphans they had gone to live at Woodleigh; but this was not until both had passed the age of childhood. Gerard Lorrayne had indeed just obtained a commission in the Army at the time of his father's death; and when it was found that after paying all the debts, there was but five hundred pounds to be divided, the young man feared he would have to forego a profession for which he seemed so well adapted. His uncle, how-

ever, would not hear of this, and made him a handsome allowance, which he had always very much exceeded.

At the present time Gerard Lorryne was thirty years of age, his sister being a few years younger, and he was his uncle's heir. Gerard had just the sort of character which was especially attractive to the old man, and in many ways the two were not unlike; for both were quick, impulsive, generous, and somewhat reckless. But there was this difference. In the uncle there was an obstinacy which, as has been already said, amounted to "pig-headedness"—a perverseness and determination to have things his own way which was very marked; while in the nephew there was hardly a trace of this. He was, on the other hand, more inclined to yield his own opinions from sheer good-nature; and if a friend asked him to back a bill or lend him money, Gerard Lorryne found it by no means easy to refuse. In truth the young man was one of those gay and jovial persons who are the favourites of society, and very often their own enemies. In his



regiment, which was stationed at Gibraltar, he was very popular, for he was ready for any fun; and, did a brother-officer need help, he was ready with assistance if by any possibility he could render it. In the letter which Mr. Lorrayne had received from his nephew, there was matter which showed the sort of man the writer was. It ran as follows:

“GIBRALTAR: June 14th, 1873.

“DEAR UNCLE CHARLES,

“I am afraid you will rather open your eyes when you read this; but there is no help for it—I want money.

“It seems but a very short time since you let me have five hundred pounds, and it is in truth so. I must, however, ask you for more, for I am sorry to say I have dropped a considerable sum at the races here.

“The chief has a mare which we thought had the pace of everything, and as he asked me to ride her I couldn't refuse, and naturally backed my mount. I knew the mare so well, and what she

could do, that I put all the money I could get together on her, and the thing seemed a certainty ; but the certainty didn't come off, and I have lost heavily.

“When one's luck is bad, it is generally *very* bad ; and I have been let in from another quarter. Three months ago I put my name to a bill for my old friend Borrodell, which he cannot meet, so I have to pay up. I daresay Borrodell will pay me some day or other, but just now he doesn't seem to have a brass farthing ; and by way of proving it he goes about 'asking for more.'

“I should like you to have seen the race. The colonel's mare was a trifle overtrained, and the weather being very hot she wasn't quite up to the mark ; but when I cantered her before the race she seemed to go well enough, and she started with odds on her. But there was another horse, belonging to a civilian who had lately come out here. Nobody knew anything about the animal, and from its appearance it didn't seem fit for much. The result, however, was that I was beaten at the post ;

and to the disgust of nearly all of us we are considerable losers.

“I have always promised you not to go to the Jews, but to let you know when I am hard up, and I now redeem my promise. And sorry as I am to write for a further advance, I must ask you to let me have three hundred as soon as possible.

“There is one piece of news which you will be glad to hear. Jephson and Bowmont, both my seniors, are going to leave—the former because he has come into a fortune quite unexpectedly, and the latter because he has served his twenty-one years. I shall therefore get my company. In days gone by all this would have cost you money, but now such things are to be had for nothing.

“I haven’t been at all well lately. Our medico says I must leave off stimulants and tobacco, and I simply cannot. How is Ethel? Does she see much of the curate now? I cannot understand what she can see in that fellow, but I suppose he must be a good sort of man or she wouldn’t care for him.

“ Please let me have the money at once, and  
with best love to my aunt and Ethel,

“ I am, your affectionate Nephew,

“ GERARD LORRAYNE.”

When Mr. Lorrayne had read this letter, it had caused him no dissatisfaction. There was to his thinking an easy-going honesty about it which pleased him. And then he was flattered that the young man had followed his advice, and kept clear of those dreadful vultures, money-lenders. It was no doubt inconvenient to Mr. Lorrayne to advance money just now, for the times were hard; and he had had to make reductions in the rents, and to put up with low prices for the products of the land he farmed himself. As Mrs. Lorrayne had told him, his obstinacy in refusing to listen to Mr. Puttyford's advice to take his money out of Shalford and Co.'s bank, had been a very serious matter for him; and he had moreover been unfortunate in the investment of his savings generally, so that Mr. Lorrayne had not much

ready money. But what he had was at his nephew's service, and so long as the young man acted fairly and above board, he wouldn't stint him, and he consequently wrote to his London agents that evening to transfer the money to his nephew's account.

Ethel Lorrayne was of a different disposition to her brother Gerard. She was in truth one of those quiet sober natures which desires to pass tranquilly through life without excitement, and her home at Woodleigh was just suited to her. Her uncle would have liked her to have had more animation; but to her aunt she was almost all she should be, and was loved by her very dearly. Ethel was a girl who cared little for those gaieties which most young ladies are so fond of; and thought it rather tiresome than otherwise to have to go to balls or dinners. Perhaps the following circumstance had helped to form her views in this respect. The rector of the parish, an old man, carried on his duty by proxy, and the gentleman who so performed it was a curate who had many

points to recommend him. This was the Rev. Simon Small, and it may briefly be told that he dearly loved Ethel Lorrayne, and was beloved by her. Mr. Simon Small, although small by name, was not small by nature, and some evil-speaking persons had been known to hint that the gentleman did not think "small beer" of himself; but in this he was libelled, for the man was a humble quiet worker, who loved to do his duty, and had been satisfied, until lately, to live without a thought of marriage. The Rev. Simon had nothing but his stipend, and this being so, the young ladies in the neighbourhood and their mammas, did not think him worth their notice, and voted his sermons dull and his voice a sleepy one. To Ethel Lorrayne his sermons were perfection, and as to his intoning—for he had managed to introduce it—she thought it was simply grand.

In winning the love of such an one as Ethel, Mr. Small was very fortunate, for she was a young lady who was calculated to make a quiet sober-minded clergyman very happy. There was at

present merely what is called "an understanding" between the two young people, and no positive engagement; but it was quite understood that so soon as they could make an income which would suffice for their united simple wants, they would join their loving hands and hearts.

Ethel Lorrayne, as has been told, had no private fortune. All she had was the two hundred and fifty pounds which was the moiety of her father's residue, and this had been invested for her at five per cent., so that she had about twelve pounds yearly and no more. She did not expect her uncle to make an income for her, and if she had she would have been disappointed, for Mr. Lorrayne was not a likely man to spend his money to further Mr. Small's advancement, either in a matrimonial or any other point of view, for to tell the truth he held the Rev. Simon very cheap. Obstinate people are inclined to think that others are obstinate, and that they themselves are easy of persuasion, and it was thus with Mr. Lorrayne. He had made suggestions to Mr. Small as to certain

matters which the pious clergyman could not meet; the consequence being that the latter was set down as a thickheaded numskull who was hardly worth an argument.

It has been told that Mrs. Lorrayne had received a letter from Ethel, by the same post which brought Arthur Westdale's. It was as follows :

“SEA VIEW TERRACE, BRIGHTON :

“June 20th, 1873.

“MY DEAREST AUNT,

“I am counting the days—I might almost say the hours—when I shall return to you.

“Everyone is very kind to me here, but you know how fond I am of quiet, and this house is noisy, and oh, so different to dear Woodleigh! I walk on the parade every day with the children, but they are so naughty, and we meet such crowds of vulgar people, that I would rather sit upstairs in my little room alone. How beautiful the garden must be looking, and the park!

“I hope the cuckoo will not have left off



singing; but it never sings so well now as when it first comes over. Never mind, another week will see me back again, and I shall be once more surrounded by the scenes I love.

“And now, my dearest aunt, I must give you the contents of a letter I have had from Mr. Small. He says, ‘It is not good for man to live alone.’ He seems to have only just found that out, and he wants me to be his wife. You know my feelings toward him, and I am confident he loves me deeply; but I cannot of course consent to his proposal; which is this. He proposes to give up his curacy, and to get a chaplaincy in India, where his stipend would be very much better. Or, if I did not like India, he would go as a missionary somewhere—to the Cape or the Fiji Islands. Just fancy going to the Fiji Islands! He has very odd ideas at times, there is no doubt; but gladly as I would join him in missionary work, I am not prepared to be eaten, even though it might do some good. No, dearest aunt; if it should chance in days to come; that Mr. Small has some

quiet living, then I would marry him; and help him to the best of my ability in carrying on his works of goodness. As there seems no chance of this, however, I wish for nothing better than to live with you and uncle at dear Woodleigh, where every tree is dear to me—every nook and corner as a well-loved friend.

“I have not replied to Mr. Small’s letter, because I shall very soon be back now, and I can answer him so much better by word of mouth. I should find it very difficult to say what I think in a letter, about the Fiji Islands; because he might perhaps think I was laughing at him, for I must own there is something ludicrous to me in his idea of the Fiji Islands.

“He does say such funny things without meaning to do so. I always think those kind of men are much more funny than your regular wits. Have you heard from Gerard lately? Poor Gerard! I wish *he* would marry and settle down quietly. I am sure he is far from strong, and a quiet country life would be much the best for him.

I must now go out for a walk with the children.  
So good-bye, dearest aunt. With my fondest  
love to you both,

“I am, your loving Niece,

“ETHEL LORRAYNE.”

By this letter it will perhaps be seen that Ethel Lorraine was not without a dash of quiet humour. The Rev. Simon Small thought so at all events, and when they were together they often found a good deal to laugh at.

Ethel was constantly amused by the almost childlike simplicity of her lover's remarks, while he was not unfrequently so tickled by her answers that his merriment would cause her big dog to look up at him in great astonishment.

Mrs. Lorraine, when she had read the letter, was amused at it, but she thought the Rev. Simon was getting rather too bold. Much as she respected him, she thought that his idea of taking away her niece from her comfortable quarters was a piece of boldness which almost bordered on audacity. From

time to time, however, she re-read the letter, and by degrees her feelings changed. It was natural that Mr. Small should long to marry her he loved. After all, love on a pittance, even in the Fiji Islands, was better than a palace where the little god was conspicuous by his absence.

## CHAPTER XII.

### THE PATENT.

WE left Paul Lorrayne crossing the road from Laurel Cottage to call on Mr. Midass, at Salisbury House. To say that he liked going there would be—well, a flat misstatement; for even though what he had done, had only been done whilst he was in a state of frenzy from his misery, still, “when cool reflection in the morning came,” he was alive to the desperate nature of his conduct.

He had been a poor starving madman, who had sought to keep the breath of life within his wife by asking for the crumbs from the rich man’s table; and as he knew not how to dig, and could not ask for charity from passers-by, he had done

what a desperate man would only do—he had broken down the law, and had entered the castle of another unbidden.

Painful as was the present moment to him, the feeling that his wife was being cared for, that his little ones were playing in the sun and had no tears of sorrow on their cheeks, refreshed his soul and gently whispered peace. Then too his change of clothing, and the fact that Mr. Midass had shown himself charitable during the night, all helped the spring of hope to rise within him; and so, although the moment was a very painful one, he bore himself with fortitude as he pulled the bell.

If it had been later in the day, Mr. Midass would have been studying human nature as it tramped along the road, or thinking calmly on the past and future as he sat upon the bench and smoked his pipe; but at the present moment he was partaking of that nourishment which even philosophers cannot do without—in other words, he was eating a very good breakfast. But although this calm and easy-going gentleman was in the

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house, Mrs. Peabody wasn't, and at the moment she faintly heard the ringing of the bell, the good woman was upon her knees cleaning the door-steps. The Sluggard was particular about his breakfast. He liked his sausage done almost to a turn—nice and brown all over—none of your brown one side and light the other; and he liked his toast thin, dry, and hard. He also liked his coffee to be good—who doesn't?—and if it were not so, a hearty scolding sounded upon the dull eardrums of Mrs. Peabody. This being so, the good woman generally managed the step-cleaning while her master was at his morning meal, and she didn't like to be disturbed when she was so engaged. Tinkle, tinkle, tinkle went the gate-bell; rub, rub, rub went the hearthstone; and the soles of a very untidy pair of boots were persistently turned towards the ringer. The woman either could not or would not hear, until the lowest step of the flight had received the due amount of whitening; but at last she stood up and turned her dirty face towards the gate.

“Ah, there’s always somebody a-ringing when I’m a-cleaning these here steps,” she said, throwing her flannel into the pail and stumping towards the gate. “Who can this be? Some gen’lman wants master, I s’pose. Who did you please to want?” she added, as she got within speaking distance.

“Is Mr. Midass disengaged?” asked Paul Lorrayne in a low voice, the tone of which, however, marked the man of birth and education.

“Did you want to see him?” was the remark of Mrs. Peabody.

“If he is disengaged I shall be glad to see him; but I am in no hurry; I can wait,” said Paul.

“Oh, you can wait,” thought the old woman; “you can’t be up to much if you can wait; them as has got money don’t like waiting. What name shall I say?” she said aloud.

“Lorrayne—Paul Lorrayne—but I can call again if Mr. Midass is engaged, or at breakfast.”

Although she did not recognise the speaker’s face, there was something in his voice which was



“familiar to her ear,” and all of a sudden a light broke in upon her. Eh! how was this? Had not that murdering villain last night a voice something like this man’s? He was a shabby-looking rascal, and this man was a gentleman. Notwithstanding this, however, the industrious and hard-working Peabody was disturbed in her mind. She had often read the Bible story how Isaac was deceived by the exterior of Jacob, notwithstanding he recognised the voice of his second son. Mrs. Peabody had often grieved that the father had been so grossly taken in, and now she determined not to be served in a similar way. If this gentleman was the robber of last night, got up in a costume for the occasion, he was probably trying to do by fair means what he could not do by foul—namely, to steal something from the premises while she went to speak with her master. This being in her mind, no one could blame her for being careful; and opening the gate, she slipped out and got behind Paul Lorrayne.

“You don’t come in ’ere no more. I knows you well, for all your fine toggery,” she said resolutely.

“I came here by your master’s wish,” said Paul.

“I thought you was starving and hadn’t a rag to your back! Why you looks as right as ninepence.”

“I am here by your master’s wish,” repeated the poor man quietly.

What further observations Mrs. Peabody might have made there is no means of knowing, for they were summarily put an end to by the appearance of the Sluggard upon the threshold of the hall-door.

“You can take away the breakfast-things, and ask that gentleman to enter,” he called out in a voice which, although it was quiet, was sufficiently firm.

Under these circumstances the good woman turned her back to the applicant, and walked away in such a manner that the tail of her dress swung

from side to side, through the motion of her body, in a very peculiar manner.

“Come in, if you please; I am quite at liberty,” said Mr. Midass, seating himself upon the garden-bench with a loud sigh of satisfaction, for he felt very comfortable; “I hope your wife is better this morning?” he added.

“Yes; she is slightly better,” said Paul. “She has with her one who seems to have the gift of healing. May Heaven bless her! may Heaven bless them both! Oh Mr. Midass, if you are the philosopher they say, perhaps your mind may fathom my great depth of misery when I strove to force an entrance here last night. Perhaps your mind may gauge the fierceness of my mania, as I tried to do what was indeed impossible. Oh, if you had acted as most men would have done, you would have handed me over to the law. If you had done so, I never should have seen her face again. May I say ‘Bless you’? may I invoke those blessings which, if ever earnest heart succeeded in obtaining them, will most assuredly be yours? It

seems absurd to say so, but perhaps the day may come when I may aid you in some way. At all events, whether it does or not, know there is a heart and hand which will do your bidding to the last. May Heaven bless you, Mr. Midass!"

The Sluggard gave another sigh of satisfaction; he felt truly comfortable. His digestion would have stood him in good stead if he had eaten of the coarsest food; but he had had the best of everything, and his cup of happiness, as his cup of coffee had so lately been, was almost flowing over. He had been disturbed in the night, but the night was a summer's one, and he had not cared. He had had the chance of studying human nature also; and he had seen how man, when by his foolish policy he lets his mind go wrong, is apt to place himself in baneful situations.

All this he knew before of course; but he was more and more confirmed in his idea, that taking life in the easiest calmest manner is the best. He was now being blessed by a poor creature, whose intentions might be good, but who had played

the game of life most foolishly. He should like to hear more of the poor creature; and so he asked him to take a place upon the bench.

“The fact that your family are in great want does not prove that you have led an honest life,” he said, as Paul did as he was bid and took a seat; “but I am disposed to credit what you say. My instinct prompts me to believe you. A curious sensation inside me urges me to do so. And no doubt Mr. Westdale will make inquiries, and set the matter of your past life at rest. In the meantime, tell me as much of your history as you care to do, and also about your patent.”

Poor Paul Lorrayne had been so little used to the voice of sympathy, or even of civility of late, that the cool easy tone of the Sluggard was grateful to him, and he gladly gave a short sketch of his life. He touched on his childhood and education, and told how his father had brought him up to follow no profession; how

he had early shown a taste for mechanics, and how, from observations in a brick-field and conversations with the workmen, he had formed ideas and taken out his patent. It was when he came to this part of his narrative that the Sluggard was most interested, for it must be told that this easy-going person had an eye to the main chance, and had got rich by having it.

“Ah, your patent—tell me about your patent. If it is worth anything you shall not want assistance.”

To tell a man that you will help him out in his invention is to lift him to the seventh heaven; and a flush of joy came to the face of the listener.

“I will not weary you with a long account of how I came on my idea; I will merely tell you a few facts. I need not tell you that bricks are rendered hard by burning, and the way in which this burning is carried out, influences very much their worth and character.”

“That is so,” said the Sluggard, whose

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fragrant tobacco was burning pleasantly in his pipe.

“And the process is slow and expensive; for much fuel and labour are required.”

“Yes; I know all that,” grunted the Sluggard.

“My invention — my patent, is to do away with the ordinary process of burning, and to supply its place by hot-air blast.”

“By a hot-air blast?”

“Yes; and when you see my plans—for I retain them still—you will, I feel sure, be convinced of their practicability.”

“Ah,” grunted the Sluggard again; for he was by no means so sure.

“The furnace will be connected by machinery with hot-air pipes and courses, in which, at intervals, there will be apertures. The blast of air, which will be forced through the pipes, will be intensely hot, and——”

“Will melt your pipes,” said the quiet Sluggard; who enjoyed hearing the sanguine patentee discuss his hobby.

“No; for the substance used will resist the heat; and by my process the mass of bricks, which will be stacked so as to admit the pipes at intervals, will be efficiently burnt.”

“Hot-air blast is no novelty.”

“No, but as applied to the burning of bricks it is, Mr. Midass.”

“And you have patented this idea?”

“Yes; and I have spent my little patrimony in trying to work it. I have borrowed money on my patent, and I have tried hard, very hard indeed, to induce master brickmakers to try it; but although I have had the most encouraging opinions from practical engineers, no one will support me with money.”

“You should form a company.”

“I wish I could. It would enrich the shareholders; it would indeed. I have almost succeeded once or twice; but at the moment success seemed certain, first one withdrew and then another, so that I was left alone, still more impoverished than before.”



“How much would you require to enable you to carry out your plans?”

“If I had five hundred pounds I could erect a kiln and pay off the lien on my patent; but where can I look for it? Some day, in the future, my patent will be worked—but not to my benefit.”

“It is the common fate of inventors, I believe,” said the comfortable Sluggard, sighing with enjoyment.

“Think of the vast amount of bricks which are now made! When my patent is acknowledged—as it must be some day, so sure as heaven is above the earth—think of the money to be got from royalties! My patent kiln would be in every brick-field; no brickmaker would be without one.”

“I should like to see your plans.”

“Then I will get them. They say you are a man of discernment, Mr. Midass. If so, you will at once understand and appreciate my invention.”

“They say I am also a sluggard, don’t they?” said the comfortable man, resting his heels on the

ground in such a way that his toes pointed to the skies.

“They call *me* madman, vagabond, rascal. There is nothing too bad for me ; there isn’t indeed.”

“Never mind that now. I shall be glad to assist you and your family a little. It will be a treat to me, for no one comes to me for help ; they seem to think it useless.”

“Let me work for you, Mr. Midass. If I can recover my strength a little you will find me zealous.”

“What can you do ?”

“I could black your shoes, if I could do nothing else ; you have been so good to me.”

“I hardly ever wear shoes ; I nearly always go about in slippers ; they are more comfortable,” said the contemplative man, wriggling on the bench to get himself into a more cosy position.

“Is there any writing I could do for you ? You might feel disposed to give your thoughts to the world. I could be your amanuensis while you smoked your pipe.”

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“Not a bad idea. I see you take my measure pretty well.”

“I am a quick writer; and if you have any past experiences you would wish to publish, I could take them down at your dictation and prepare a work for the press.”

The Sluggard did a thing which he had hardly ever done before: he jumped up and brought the palm of his right hand down upon his thigh with a considerable smack.

“You’ve hit it,” he said.

“So have you,” thought Paul Lorrayne; but of course he did not say so.

“Quiet as I seem to be—quiet as I am—I am one who has passed through many startling scenes. Those who see me in my garden, enjoying a contemplative life, would little think what I have taken part in. I will think of what you say; and in the meantime I shall hear Mr. Westdale’s account of what he has heard about you.”

“And my patent—you will give my patent

your consideration, Mr. Midass? It will enrich you, it will indeed."

"I have enough—more than enough; for with my general knowledge, and as a calm looker-on, I can always buy and sell with success."

"Then you will benefit the world, Mr. Midass, by assisting to work my patent. Just imagine, making bricks by hot air!" and poor Lorrayne could not but let his mind wander in blissful ecstasy for a moment, to the joys of future hopes and expectations.

"You have never tried this plan, and found it useless?"

"I have never had the means to give it a fair chance. If you will build a kiln by my present plans, you will soon see what the result will be. Just think of the saving; it is enough to take away anyone's breath!"

"It has taken away all your money, and very nearly your breath into the bargain," said the Sluggard; and what he said was so true that Lorrayne was cast down again.

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“If you would assist me, you would be one of the richest men in England; the results would be stupendous, simply stupendous.”

“Immense riches have no charm for me; I am rich, and if I had millions upon millions, I doubt if the passing hours would bring more happiness to me. I shall not care to eat another mouthful; to drink another drop; I do not want men’s praises, or the flattery of such as follow wealth; I want no gold or glitter, no dashing carriage, no liveried servants, no cunning garments, no smiles from women. I only want repose, good health, clear brains, and money at command in case I want it; for the rest, I am content, as you see, with a plain house, an ugly old woman for attendant, a garden in which Nature holds her sway almost unchecked, and leisure time to think the problem of life out.”

“And you never feel the want of woman’s tenderness—of some fond wife, whose presence would be as the shining light from heaven?”

“We will not discuss that question,” said

Mr. Midass, with a tinge of uneasiness in his voice; and as he said so he turned his eyes by chance, towards a garden-path which was some distance off. Lorryne followed the direction of his glance, and saw a girl hurrying with a basket on her arm, as though in search of someone.

“It is my gardener’s daughter, his only child,” said Mr. Midass, following the retiring figure with his eyes. “He has lost his wife; he has lost his other children; and in her he possesses one who loves him dearly, and whose aim in life is to make her father happy.”

There was a tone almost of melancholy in the words the Sluggard used which caused Lorryne to note the person who had been the cause of them. He could see that the girl in question was tall and slight, and dressed in that plain way which women in her rank of life should use. The cotton dress, the plain handkerchief pinned across her shoulders, and the strong boots, seemed unlike the dress of the

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working people nowadays; for there was no attempt at finery, no gay ribbons and flowers in the shady hat; but to Lorrayne, even in the cursory glance he had of her, there was something of refinement; and having made this observation, his mind reverted to his own affairs.

“She is taking her father’s luncheon to him,” said Mr. Midass; “they live about half a mile away, and she is the best walker of the two, so she takes him a little bread-and-cheese at this hour, and he goes home to dinner.”

Lorrayne made no reply, his thoughts were with his patent and his wife, nor could he understand why Mr. Midass should think it worth his while to tell him these particulars.

There is no animal so inconsistent as man. He blows hot and cold in such a way that nothing is surprising that he does—no variation in his humours to be wondered at. The Sluggard was upon the whole a consistent person; he was partly the philosopher he thought himself. Of late, however, there had been some slight dis-

turbance in his mind. In his early manhood he had been engaged to marry—to marry youth and beauty certainly; but, as it proved, to one who was so versatile that, although the fatted calf was killed and all things were prepared, the young lady—just before the wedding—had gone off with a gay young drysalter and left the poor Sluggard in the lurch. Mr. Midass was no sluggard in those days. He did not take things quite as easily as at his present middle-age, and the circumstance was naturally very grievous to him. He was not so foolish as to hate all women in consequence of this misadventure, but he fully made his mind up that no one should play him such a trick again, and hitherto no one had. The whole current of his life too had been changed. He ceased to make his fellow-men companions, and worked and grew rich in his tranquil philosophic way. Even now, although he bought and sold, he did so from a distance, as it were; watching the current course of things, and, when the time had



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come, putting in the sickle and reaping the results of his plans and observations. Thus matters had gone on for years. He had waxed rich and he had waxed fat, and he was full of quiet contentment and was happy; but somehow for the last year or so, he had found his eyes generally turned towards the garden-path at the hour when the girl usually made her appearance. Why was it? Did Mr. Midass know himself? No, he didn't. He did not think her beautiful, and if he had he could not have admired her features, for they were almost concealed by the shady hat. But somehow there was that in her walk and manner which touched him—which smote upon his sympathy. The strong thick boots, the straight cotton dress, the very way the handkerchief was pinned across the shoulders, the quiet hurrying with the basket—all seemed to tell him that this girl was different from the common run of women. And now as he withdrew his eyes from the retiring figure, something of sadness passed over his features for the moment; but the look quickly

vanished, and he was like Richard—"himself again."

"Well," he said, "if you will bring me your plans, your patent shall have my consideration, and I will give you employment as my amanuensis. This will keep you from starvation, and perhaps better times may come."

They seemed already to have come, for the words which fell upon the ears of Paul Lorrayne, were like the dew of Hermon, so softly did they fall. Ah, who can tell if, in the denseness of the blackest night, some light or succour may not come to the poor wanderer who has lost his way? Who can tell if the stern features of the despot who sends the wretch to hopeless exile, may not be softened by some lingering touch of pity, and take off half the sentence, or remit it?

Truly, it is not often so. For when misfortune overtakes a man, other misfortunes—like devils climbing each other's backs to seize their prey—will often drag him down to earth.

But in Lorrayne's case, the exception seemed

about to happen. A few short hours ago, he was a desperate maniac — hope gone, and frenzy in his brain. Now the man who might have crushed him, was promising to take his patent into favour, and to give him means to feed his family. Yes, his patent would succeed at last. How rich and happy they would all be!—His patent—his dear, dear patent!

Truly if someone had in days gone by given poor Bernard Palissy an order for a couple of tons of coals, the potter would not have been more pleased than was Paul Lorryne at the Sluggard's promises.

As he rose and took his leave, and tried to force his thanks and blessings on his benefactor, he felt something like the pride of manhood in his veins; and, hurrying along the road, thought of the healing power such news would have upon his wife—that gentle partner in all his woes and sorrows.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### THE HAND OF KINDNESS.

WHEN Paul Lorrayne reached the comfortless cottage which he called his home, he found that Mrs. Westdale had left his wife; who, although very weak, had rallied wonderfully. Before leaving, Mrs. Westdale had made the room, so far as it was possible, look neat and tidy, and she had promised to return in the afternoon; so that when Paul entered, he was cheered by the improved condition of things about him. But what touched him to the quick; what pierced his heart with poignant sorrow; was to see his calm pale wife trying to leave her bed.

Weak though she was, she was full of courage, and she had heard her youngest child crying in the garden. The little one had called out "Mother!" and what could the mother do while life and breath were left, but answer to the call? She had often thought, when pondering over Bible lore, how those poor mothers must have suffered when, at the slaughter of the innocents, the strong rough soldiers had torn the babies from their arms, and slashed their tender bodies with sharp swords. Whatever some might say, had been her thoughts; there surely must be fire eternal, to punish such a fiend as Herod;—there must be everlasting hell for him! Great Solomon was wise; but did he know the anguish which rent the mother's heart, when he commanded to have the infant cut in halves? Did he know this; or was he indifferent, and merely wished to show his power of judgment? Let us hope he erred in ignorance, and that the pain his order must have caused the mother may not be visited upon his head.

"Dearest, what are you doing? You are too

weak to leave your bed to-day," said the husband, springing forward to restrain his wife.

"Dear Paul, I hear little Bertie. He is crying; he is calling 'Mother.'"

"Bertie is all right, my darling; he is playing with the kitten—it has scratched him, I think. And now I have something to tell you, my own beloved wife. Help has come to us, and I am promised work—I am more than promised work. My patent—my valuable patent—it is to be tried, if the plans are approved of. Oh dearest, we shall be rich, and I shall be famous; and you, my beautiful and tender girl, will live in the refinement which you are so fitted for."

"You are promised work, dear Paul?" said the poor woman, who believed in work, but who dreaded in her secret soul the patent.

"Yes, work, dearest. I am to be the amanuensis of a wealthy man—one who can afford to pay me; and pay means happiness; for we can be happy with very little."

"Oh, what a load your words relieve me from.

I have never yielded to despair—I have never doubted Providence—and now, when night seemed blackest, help was on its way.”

The words came from the speaker’s mouth but slowly, for she was very weak; and closing her eyes, she fell into a gentle sleep while her husband watched her.

Yes, her husband watched her; and as he did so excitement left his brain, and calm and sacred thoughts took hold of it. Of late his mind had often known a doubt of Heaven’s justice, but now he saw more clearly, and, falling on his knees, remained in silent prayer. Ah, it is moments such as these which mark new eras in the lives of men. There comes in times like these, a crisis in their views; and from wavering doubting disputants, they become repentant true believers.

While the mother slept, the father, after a while, went to his children, and sought to make up for the mother’s care. The little ones were happy. The kitten which they played with gave them as much pleasure as did the costly toy of

many children whose parents piled up riches. The common garden-flowers, which year by year put forth their beauty, were to the little ones as gay and sweet as carpet-borders, or the scientific gardening which we sometimes see. The dog-rose growing on the hedge, although it grew beyond their reach, was coveted as much by them as the newest garden rose would be by many; and as they scratched the ground with bits of wood and called it digging, they laid their tiny plans for future flowers.

The afternoon brought Westdale and his wife again. Both had been busy in their work of goodness; and their presence was like the sun from heaven, so gladdening was it.

Mrs. Westdale had made some jelly for the invalid, and had brought some strawberries from her garden; and her husband had not come empty-handed. The men which formed his chief acquaintance—the artist-class—had, upon hearing the sad tale of want, begged to be allowed to send a trifle; and in this way Arthur Westdale had collected a pretty little sum.



There are many ways of giving ; but the way in which this money was handed over to poor Paul Lorrayne enhanced the obligation, and made him yearn towards this new-found friend. Ah, when his patent should succeed, this man would be the first he would enrich ; he would give him patent bricks enough to build a town. Such was the sanguine thought which the luckless patentee had conjured up ; but it was joy to him ; for he had no more doubt that his invention would succeed, than that Heaven had sent him friends in his most dire need. Misfortune on misfortune often falls upon a man, and then the tide will turn and blessings cover him. The patentee, as he pocketed the little parcel, felt sure that victory would be his. He had always been a sanguine man ; and as he talked with Westdale, he couldn't for his life prevent his thoughts from wandering to his plans.

“ You have seen Mr. Midass ? ” said Westdale.

“ Yes, I have seen him. He has been most kind ; he has promised me work.”

“ Work ! What sort of work ? ”

“While we were talking, Mr. Westdale, I suggested, in consequence of what he told me, that a narrative of his past adventures would be acceptable in print. He caught at the idea, and I am to act as his amanuensis.”

“Just the work to suit you, I should say.”

“Yes; literature is my form. But he has promised more than this, sir; he has promised to examine the plans of my patent, and, if he approves of them, to assist in working it.”

“Has he?” said Westdale, somewhat coldly, for the patent found no favour in his sight. “Well, if he is good enough to give you work, pray let the patent rest awhile.”

“It is so certain of success, Mr. Westdale, it only wants money to start it, and then——”

“Well,” said Westdale firmly, “you have heard what I have said—I strongly advise you to drop your patent for the present; it will keep, I suppose?”

The poor man hung his head; he could not argue; in his position it was impossible. But to

be told to drop his patent was like giving him a letter of reprieve from death, and telling him to throw it in the fire. "I will be guided by yourself and Mr. Midass," he said at last.

"Of course, if Mr. Midass likes to spend his money on your patent, I can have no objection; but work first, and let the other be a second consideration."

"I will, indeed," said Paul Lorrayne; "but——" He was on the point of prophesying once more his victory, when it struck him that the words might irritate his new-found benefactor, so he stopped, and remained silent.

"I have written to your uncle at the address you gave me," said Westdale; "and no doubt I shall hear from him in a day or two. I hope sincerely he will assist you in getting a new home together."

"My uncle will do nothing, Mr. Westdale. I do not like to speak harshly of anyone at a time when I am meeting with such kind treatment; but my uncle is very stubborn—very stubborn indeed;

when you get his answer you will form a truer opinion of his nature."

"We will hope for the best. Have you no cousins?"

"Yes, I have two; but they are not in a position to assist me."

"Well, you have now the means to get both food and clothing for your family. Now remember my advice; put your patent on the shelf, and work; even for the smallest sum. The moment I get a reply from your uncle I will let you have it; and now I must return;" and Westdale, going to the cottage-door, called to his wife to know if she were ready to go home.

"Yes, I am ready, Arthur; but do come in. Mrs. Lorrayne is so much better, she wishes to see you now her sight is a little stronger; don't you, dear?" said Mrs. Westdale, laying her hand tenderly upon that of the invalid.

Westdale did as he was asked, and in the quiet well-bred way which a gentleman has so well the power of using, added words of hope

and comfort, and repeated the assurances he had made that morning.

“She will want help with the children at first; will she not, Arthur?” said Mrs. Westdale. “I have been thinking of a plan. Our little Margaret has a sister who will come in for the day, and I am going to send her here directly I get back. She is a good girl, and will be very useful.”

“Then we had better go and see about it at once,” said Westdale; and leaving the poor cottage, the husband started with his wife for their own snug little dwelling; where little Molly was waiting for her evening romp, and a few of the fine strawberries which ripened in the garden.

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## CHAPTER XIV.

### MRS. WESTDALE'S ERRAND.

WESTDALE and his wife were sitting at their morning meal in the neat parlour of Laurel Cottage, on the third day after the letter had been sent to Woodleigh Park, when the click of the garden-gate was heard, and the old postman was seen to be shuffling along the path with some letters in his hand.

Little Margaret, who had all a servant's curiosity as to letters, and who usually managed to have the scraper to clean, or the doorstep to hearthstone, was ready to take them from him; and the baby-girl, who had climbed a chair, and had seen the kind old man, who had always a

smile for her, was loudly calling out to have some given to her through the window ; so that between them the rightful owners were obliged to wait.

When the pretty infant was allowed to have the documents she found it hard to part with them, and with that instinct of imitation which is so strongly marked in children, the child would copy Margaret, and closely investigate the superscriptions.

“Who likes strawberries,” said the mother, holding up a tempting one. “Is there any little girl who wants a strawberry ?”

The ruse answered, and with the joyful cry of “’Tawberry, ’tawberry,” the little one allowed the letters to be taken from her hand.

“They are all for you, Arthur ; not a line for me,” said Mrs. Westdale.

“Ah, here’s one from Gloucestershire ! Hollo, there are two—two with the Gloucestershire post-mark ! What can that mean ? I only wrote one letter,” said her husband.

“Do make haste and open them, Arthur ; I am

so longing to know whether the uncle will assist the poor Lorraines."

As Westdale was as curious as his wife, he very soon broke the covers, and the letter from Mr. Lorraine of Woodleigh, which has already been made known, was read by him.

"Ah," he said, as he passed it to his wife, "the poor fellow here was right—there is obstinacy stamped in every line; there is presumption and pig-headedness in every syllable. Hollo!" he added, "here is a letter of another meaning—a five-pound note too! Come, that looks well! Yes; by all that's good, here's a five-pound note from the aunt, enclosed in a few lines which are as full of womanly kindness as the uncle's is of the reverse! This doesn't say much for the *ménage* at Woodleigh Park, I should say."

Mrs. Westdale had put down the uncle's letter with a heavy sigh, for it grieved her deeply. It seemed so dreadful to her that a man who had inherited a fine estate, in which his brothers had never had a share, should cherish a persistent



quarrel with his nephew, because the latter had not harkened to his counsel. Surely, although the law of England had given him the property, in common equity the starving relative should be relieved. Surely, in common justice, the brother's son had at least some claim upon the crumbs beneath the table! But no; it seemed he had not—at least the uncle thought so, and had therefore held his hand. Poor human nature! poor rich man nature! Ah, perhaps the time may come, though it seems very distant, when men may change, and justice—real justice—hold a place within them; but at present the prospect seems too far away for hope. When Westdale passed the aunt's letter to his wife, the relief she found in reading it was great. There seemed to her a tone about it which spoke the mind of one who was not tender only, but whose brain was thoughtful. The Sister of Mercy whom she spoke of, how valuable would be her service and advice! And then the money—this, in addition to what her husband had collected, would keep the poor Lorraines

for several weeks. And as she thought of this and the promised aid of Mr. Midass, Mrs. Westdale almost forgot the uncle's letter, or did her best to forget it.

"Shall I take the money to them, Janie, or will you?" said Westdale; "perhaps you had better, for I must be at the studio as soon as possible. I begin my portrait of Mrs. Raddleton to-day, which I fear I shan't do justice to."

"I had rather you took it, Arthur, for you might give Mr. Lorrayne some hints as to spending it; I fear he thinks too much about his patent to make the most of things."

"But he will listen to his wife, Janie; with all her quiet gentleness, she seems to have much calm good sense."

"And she is so much better; she can get about now, and looks quite happy. Oh Arthur, she is such a sweet creature! I hardly ever met a woman I admired so much. She is a thorough lady," said Mrs. Westdale.

"Yes, she is a lady. What they must have

suffered! If she had not been firm and good, they must all have perished; for her husband is excitable, and has been driven to frenzy. Well, Janie, you had better take the money—get it changed at the butcher's—and you will of course give the aunt's kind message. As to the other letter, I see no necessity for showing it."

"I will merely say that he declines to assist them at present."

"Perhaps, after all, you had better let them read it. It alludes to the education of the children, and it may make him diligent. We will take a turn round the garden before I start. Come along, Molly," said Westdale, rising and taking the child in his arms.

It was the pleasant morning custom of the Westdales to take a stroll together in their garden before the artist left for London. He usually spent some time there before the breakfast-hour, but his inspection of the crops was not complete except his wife and little one were with him.

In early summer, especially if it happens to be showery, very rapid progress is made by vegetables. The pea-pods which we noticed the day before as looking lean and flat, have during the warm night and early morning increased in bulk. The lettuces look taller and want tying up. The vegetable-marrow shoots seem to be much longer, and we look at the handsome flowers they produce to see which are "blind" ones, and which will yield the wholesome fruit.

"There are a good many gooseberries, Janie. I think we had better use them before they ripen. There is nothing much nicer than gooseberry-fool," said Westdale.

"As I make it, Arthur. Confess I make it well, dear!" said the wife, laughing.

"Pretty fair for an amateur," said Westdale, pretending some reserve.

"Well, if you won't praise it, Molly will. Won't you, Molly?"

The little one shook her curly head, and broke into a merry baby laugh. Young as she was,

the spirit of harmless fun began to show itself, and she caught the meaning of the parents' badinage.

"What! you don't like mother's gooseberry-fool, you little rogue?" said Mrs. Westdale, as she tickled the tender neck. "Then I must eat it all myself, if Molly and father won't help me."

It was with such harmless prattle, such loving interest in their simple plans, that a few happy minutes were occupied each morning before the husband left his home.

Simple as the words might be, unimportant as their bearing really was, there was yet something in them which, as the artist sat before his easel, and strove to paint his best, filled him with the joy which pleasant memories bring us. And the wife, too, as she busied herself in her household duties, felt her heart to sing with gladness in the fulness of her thanksgiving.

It was at last agreed that Mrs. Westdale should go to Lorrayne's Cottage with the money which

had come from Woodleigh; and when her husband had started for London she worked diligently, so that everything might be in order before she set out upon her errand.

Where willing hands are busy, matters are soon put straight; and, with the assistance of her handy little "general" servant, the mistress of Laurel Cottage was soon in a position to leave home. And there was little Molly—should she go to? It was but half a mile, and her tender legs could walk that easily. Seeing her mother with her hat on ready for a walk, the pretty child would not be comforted unless she might also go, and it was at last arranged that Margaret should wheel her in the perambulator, and then run back again as fast as her young limbs could take her. As they passed the gate of Salisbury House, the Sluggard saw them, for he was smoking on his accustomed bench, and the sight caused him a grunt of satisfaction.

He would not have turned his head to see a Lord Mayor's Show, or the Shah, or any such

fine sights; but to see the trio in the morning sun, the pleasant voices mingling with other summer sounds, gladdened his heart, and he actually stood up and strolled towards the gate to watch them on their way.

It struck him, as it no doubt has others, that there is much in the arrangement of a group, as we see it at some distance, which, without our knowing why, or asking ourselves why, attracts our notice. Two or three persons may walk along together, and unless we know them we take no special notice, for they may be badly grouped; the short person may be in the centre of the others, or three persons of a height may be together. These do not group to take the eye, but such a trio as passed the Sluggard's gate would almost have attracted anyone. The tall and smiling mother in her simple morning-dress gave height; Margaret by her side reduced it gradually, and her hands upon the little carriage gave curved lines; while the perambulator and the baby sloped off to an angle with the road,

giving substance to the group, and making the general arrangement quite artistic. There was no hurry, so they strolled on leisurely. The baby-girl must needs get out and walk, for there are flowers on the bank to gather, and there is a wandering pig to chase. But at length they reached the lane down which the cottage stood which they were seeking.

Pale, worn, and thin, the poor mother was resting on a seat outside the door, while her husband was endeavouring to restore some order to the garden. The children, too, were playing near their parents, and, seeing the visitors approach, ran and stood each side of their mother in expectation. They had not long to wait to find if these were friends, for the pleased flush upon their mother's face told them it was so, and going up to the perambulator they soon made friends with little Molly. Margaret's sister now came every day to do the household work, and Mrs. Westdale sent her little maid indoors, so that she might tell her news and show the letters. The uncle's could not but give



pain; but those who are used to pain can bear a little more. And then there was the aunt's kind note, and the money, so that altogether the budget would not be unacceptable.

"And so you are enjoying the morning air. I am so glad to see you out. The sun does wonders for us all," said Mrs. Westdale.

"Yes; I am better, and the sight of you acts like a charm to make me strong again. You always bring me comfort; your presence seems to bring a blessing with it. Does it not, Paul?" said the sick woman, turning her languid eyes upon her husband.

"It does indeed, dearest; and I feel that the goodness of Mrs. Westdale's heart must yield her happiness, in the joy she feels at our delight to see her. Here is a chair, if you will sit beside my wife," said Lorraine, putting his spade aside and preparing to enjoy the pleasure of the visit.

"Mr. Westdale has heard from your uncle, Mr. Lorraine; his letter is not what one would wish."

"I expected nothing, and therefore can hardly

be disappointed. I know his nature too well to look for help from him," said Paul. "Ah, what a strange marvellous thing it is, this unforgiving spirit; and," he added, "I, too, whose fault it has been, that I worked harder in a year than he has done all his life! And yet, because I could not throw aside the work I am most fitted for, and am brought to want, he wraps himself in proud cold egotism, and says: 'No; you have made your bed; you must lie on it.' May Heaven forgive him, as I do! But oh, it is sad to find that human nature is so harsh."

"Do not speak of him, dear Paul. Some day, perhaps, he may see his error, and be sorry. I hope no evil may come upon him. We wish him well, do we not, dear husband?"

"Forgive him! Wish him well! Oh yes, indeed. I, who have met with such frank forgiveness as exceeds all bounds, I am not one to harbour any sense of cruel treatment; and now that I am to have work I care not for his harshness. Give me health and work, that

we may have food and common necessaries, and I would not change places with my uncle."

"And there is another letter," said Mrs. Westdale, "from your aunt, written in a different spirit. But I will leave you a moment while you read it and look at the enclosure;" and the refined and gentle lady, who thought, perhaps, the words of kindness might almost melt their souls in their weak state, moved off to join the children, who were busy with their long-suffering kitten, each tugging at some portion of its carcass.

The letter had been placed in Paul Lorryne's hands, but he gave it to his wife; and as she read it he leant over her and read it also. There was indeed a tone of kindness in it. There was that curious mixture of sentiment which is often shown, when writers or speakers wish to deal tenderly with a subject, in which the persons concerned are placed, at least on one side, in an opposing form. But there was the true woman's sense of pity in it; pity for

those whose evil fortunes and want of judgment, perhaps, had brought them down so low, and an underlying sense of sorrow that her husband should go his way robust and hardy, and resist the spirit of generosity which she knew must be within him.

“Your poor aunt,” said the invalid as she finished the letter, “she wishes us to know and feel her sympathy. Short and simple though her letter is, there is a touching quietness about it which makes me yearn towards her.”

“And there is a tone of sadness in it too,” said Paul. “I hope she is happy; but I fear my uncle’s nature must often pain her.”

“Five pounds, Paul—think of that! It will last us a long time, and we can pay our rent again.”

“Yes, dearest,” said the man, in whom the natural pride of a gentleman by birth and education was wounded amidst all his gratitude; “but it is sent clandestinely. She does not dare

to let her husband know, or harsh and cruel words might be the consequence. The money, too, is his, who hears the story of his brother's son with cool indifference. We cannot but use it; but when by work I can refund it, I shall do so."

"Ah Paul, let us take the gifts which heaven sends us through its agents in no grating spirit. Dearest husband, we cannot read each other's minds correctly. For all we know, your uncle may have had some sense of certainty that his wife would act as she has done, and, while keeping up his seeming coldness, have had a sense of pity for you."

"You do not know him. At his time of life vices are confirmed."

"At least I would think so, Paul."

"You shall, dearest—I was churlish to make the observation. Yes; we will take Heaven's kind gifts, and when we can return to others the goodness which is granted to ourselves we will do so—not before." And Lorryne, soothed by the firm

and gentle spirit of his wife, slipped the money and his pride into his pocket.

Mrs. Westdale had been so amused with the gambols of the children that she was in no haste to separate them. Her little Molly was delighted with companions, and in their turn the young Lorraines made much of the pretty curly-headed little creature, which seemed at times like some fairy from the skies. But "time and tide wait for no man," and as the time was passing, Mrs. Westdale must return to Laurel Cottage.

"I am so glad to find you getting better," she said as she prepared to start; "before very long I hope you will be coming to see me in my cottage. I don't know how it is," she added, "but I feel as though we should be close friends in future; something tells me that our ways will run together in some way."

"May it be so," said Paul, speaking for his wife in the energy of his spirit. "The time may come when my patent will be in use; when many friends—or seeming friends—will court us; but

for you and Mr. Westdale will be reserved that rare sense of devoted admiration and respect, which does not often stir the human heart."

"Let us always make it our rule to do a kindness when we can," said Mrs. Westdale. "Good-bye; I shall pay you another visit very soon;" and putting her little one into the perambulator, she started on her homeward journey with a light heart, light from a sense, which acts of sympathy and kindness always give to each of us.

## CHAPTER XV.

### THE DREAM.

WHEN Mrs. Westdale had left the cottage, Paul sat beside his wife to discuss with her the message from his aunt, and the little fortune—as it seemed to him—which she had sent. Those only who have long been destitute can know the sense of great relief, when a few pounds come unexpectedly. Those only whose garments have one by one been sold to buy the merest necessaries, can know the joy which fills the heart when a few shillings happen to be paid to them. Perhaps *relief*—intense relief—brings us a keener sense of satisfaction than does joy itself. Joy may come upon us when we have contentment and can do without



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it; but relief—how it may take the burden from the back, and soothe the overwrought brain! How it may ease the tortured body, and by its lulling power, make happiness of pain! And this relief had come to the Lorraines. A few short days ago and they were penniless and starving; there seemed indeed no help for them in this world; and could the parents but have known their children would be cared for, they would have gone “the way to dusty death” without a murmur; and gladly changed the hardship they were bearing, for that bright home which is man’s only resting-place. Now, however, things had altered with them. Kind friends had started up as if by magic, and money had come in from different sources. Work too, the best of all, was promised; and then the patent—the dear much-loved patent—it was to be looked at by a man who had the reputation of being shrewd and clever. Its success seemed certain now; for to look at it with clear intelligence was to see its merits; and to see them was to bring them out. Yes, the dark and gloomy night seemed to have

passed away, and morning to have dawned with every prospect of fair weather. The weary soul, eased of its tension, might stretch itself in fields of flowery hope. True, the brightness of a morning often fades, and clouds roll up again; but such a night as the Lorraines had passed—it surely would not come again. No, the corner of that lane which leads from misery had been turned; beyond, their eyes could see a country where the grass grew green, and shining water reflected happy scenes. Ah, take thine ease, poor soul! In thankful gladness let the weary limbs be rested, for Heaven cries “Hold.” The torture is enough; henceforth go on thy way, poor pilgrim, with a sense of joy—there is no need of further trials in your case; you will not fall away, because you have been purged with fire and have stood the test.

The husband and wife sat silent for some time, each busy with the future. The latter was the first to speak.

“I had a dream last night; it was such a

happy one, Paul," she said, looking as though the memory of it stood out clearly in her mind.

"Ah, you are getting stronger, dearest. When the mind and body are mending, our night-thoughts—our dreams—are pleasant to us."

"This message from your aunt, Paul, this money, Mrs. Westdale's visit—all seem to bear upon it."

"I can't say I have any faith in dreams," said the husband, who nevertheless was a confirmed dreamer so far as his patent was concerned.

"But if they come true, Paul, the mind must surely be reflecting some picture of the future."

"Perhaps it is so. But whenever I have dreamt about my patent it has always been a worrying dream, not at all the sort of dream one would expect considering my invention is a certainty."

Mrs. Lorrayne said nothing. Much as she loved her husband, and highly as she thought of his abilities, she wished the patent at the bottom of the sea. The patent might be a good patent, but it was a very aggravating one. It had been

the source of all their hardships; for, had her husband devoted himself to steady work, and left the task of making bricks by hot-air blast to others, he would undoubtedly have gained a competency. These were her thoughts, and these had always been her thoughts; but it was not the province of a woman to teach, and she refrained from irritating her husband by doing what her knowledge of the world told her would be useless—namely, to try and convince a man against his will.

“If you had faith in dreams, I would tell you this one,” said the wife. “It was not like a common dream.”

“I have no faith in my own dreams, dearest; but that is no reason why yours may not come true. At all events, I should like to hear it, if you feel strong enough.”

“Then I will tell it to you, Paul. What are the children doing?”

“They are very happy, building a house of sand, I think.”

For the moment the wife could not but think how her children's occupation was typical of her husband's past career. He, too, had passed his time—had passed some years—in what was, to her thinking, little else than building, or trying to build, a house of sand. Every time he had reared a portion of it—every time he had, as it were, put a part of the structure together—it had crumbled beneath his hand, and left him in a worse position than before.

“You are sure it will not bore you, Paul?” she said.

“No; I shall enjoy it. It will make me feel as if I was a child once more listening to a fairy tale.”

“The first part I cannot quite remember, but I seemed to be enveloped in black darkness, so thick and heavy as to almost smother me. After awhile a movement in the air took place, and a loud rushing sound, as though some giant bird was hovering near me. I held my arms out to keep the monster off, and then the noise of rushing

wings increased, as though another creature had approached. I listened for the sound of voices, and at last I heard them in a language which was strange to me. The voice of one was deep, and harsh, and grating; that of the other, sweet and low, but firm and confident. My sleeping senses strove and strained their utmost, and I dreamt the forms of angels were about me—angels in altercation.

“Then I heard fierce blows as struck with flapping wings, and as the blows grew heavier the oppressive darkness lessened, and a faint gleam of light was visible. Then darkness gathered thick again; then the light grew stronger; but at length the former yielded to the latter, and in my dream I saw the forms contending. They were two angels: the one with all the marks of heaven on her, the other with a dark malignant look, as though from that dread place we know as Hell.

“By aid of the increasing brightness, I saw the fight for mastery; and I felt I was the object of the fierce contention. But how could Hell contend

with Heaven ?Blinded by the flood of light and glory, which now shone out from the bright creature of the skies, the spirit from the prison of the damned gave way, and with averted face and drooping wings, gave up the combat.

“My mental vision was now clear, and the heavenly angel was rising in the air. While yet she hovered over me, however, she turned her face to mine, and on her forehead was a word. That word was ‘Hope.’ As her form rose higher to the pure blue sky, she pointed to the beaten figure of the other; then, sweeping down again, she whispered in my ear.

“‘Yonder goes black Despair,’ she said. ‘My name is Hope, and from my place in Heaven I saw the dark descent upon your dwelling. Be happy, sister; be at peace; Despair has gone for ever; Hope is your attendant, and will soon return with other messengers; each one of whom will bring good tidings.’ The angel kissed me, and I woke; not with the weary languor of a dreamer, but with my mind and body braced with happiness.

So happy and so calm I felt, that I slept again and dreamt another dream."

"Perhaps you had better rest, dear Minnie; it may exhaust you, this calling back your dreams."

"No, Paul; if you do not mind, I like to tell them; for I know not how it is, but such dreams as mine last night, seem like revelations from above."

"Ah, I have often dreamt of my patent; but my dreams have never come true."

Mrs. Lorraine could not truly say she thought they would, so she was silent for a time; recalling the vision of the night.

"I thought I was sitting upon the terrace before a noble mansion in the country," she said at last; "about me everything was calm and quiet; a smooth green lawn on which walked strutting peacocks, some with outspread tails; pastures of flowers; clumps of flowering shrubs; and beyond the garden a wide expanse of grass-land, studded with fine trees. Oh, the picture was very fair, and yet I longed for something. Presently, walking slowly arm-in-arm in seeming happy confidence, there



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appeared three figures. There were yourself, dear Paul, and our two boys. Your heads were bent in earnest conversation, and in your hand you held a map or plan, to which you every now and then referred. Our sons seemed interested and gave their whole attention, and as you strolled upon the pleasant sward I watched you.

“Yes, the father and his sons seemed deep in future schemes, and after gazing at you long and wistfully, I was aware of something by my side, the presence of some visitant. Pale and shining dimly in the noonday light, was the grand figure of the angel Hope, and with her were two other angels. Coming towards me, and gently bending forward, Hope whispered in my ear: ‘I said I would return, dear sister, with other messengers; they are with me now, and have the privilege of bidding you look to Peace and Happiness as your attendant angels. I shall be near you also.’ Kissing my brow, Hope moved aside, and Peace and Happiness each whispered words of soothing to me. They bade me think they did not

promise this world's treacherous glitter and excitement, the joy of proud ambition gratified, or hollow pleasures which leave a base reaction; but the calm delights which Heaven's chosen have, the sure anticipation of a life which lasts for ever. Each kissed my brow, as Hope had done, and then they moved away; but as they did so, the cadence of their beating pinions was like music, and a low sweet chant fell gently on my ear.

"This was my dream, Paul. Was it not a pretty one?" said the wife, on whose pale face there seemed almost a luminous expression as though reflecting light from some mysterious source.

"It was indeed, my darling; you ought to write it down some day, so that the boys may read it. The plan you saw in my hand was evidently the working of my patent."

"It may have been so, Paul; you seemed deeply interested in it."

"Ah, I shall buy a country place some day when my patent is successful; and so your dream may come true. The boys seemed interested too,

you say? Perhaps after a time I shall be able to leave the entire management to them; and then, who knows? I may hit upon some other invention still more grand."

Yes, like his children, Paul Lorrayne was building houses on loose sand. No sooner was one distressing patent launched, than another was to spring up. His wife, as she heard his words, almost regretted she had related that portion of the dream which told his part in it; but no, she would not rob him of one ray of hope, one jot of joyful expectation.

"When do you commence your work for Mr. Midass?" she asked.

"I go to him to-morrow morning. We might have begun to-day; but he is collecting his ideas, he says. He tells me the composition must be mine—that he can only give me facts."

"It will be so nice for you, Paul; you were always clever at letter-writing and children's stories, and no doubt you will make Mr. Midass's life very interesting."

“ Ah, Minnie, composition and stringing sentences together is not my forte ; but I shall do my best you may be sure ; for he will help me with my patent. He will help me with my patent, and you know what that means ; it is simply the realisation of your dream. Hope is present to me now, and therefore ought to be to you. Despair has fled already, and wealth untold awaits us in the future. Broad lands, sweet retired gardens will be ours ; Nature, like your peacocks, will spread her glories round us ; and, while we are the envied of others, we shall not be annoyed by envy ; for in our calm retreat we shall not see it. The poor, the destitute, the starving patentee, will look to us for help and comfort. We shall build rows of almshouses ; great kitchens will send out food in heavy-laden waggons, and on these waggons will be written my name : ‘ Paul Lorrayne, the brickmaker.’ ”

It was thus the dreamer aired his fancy ; it was thus he hugged those hopes, which many another patentee has hugged as closely.

His wife, as she listened to his sanguine words, almost felt her dream obscured by shadows. But yet it was so vivid, so unusual in its power on her mind, that nothing could dispel it; and then she had new friends, who, by their aid and counsel, would assist her husband and do their best to hinder him from following phantoms. Yes, Heaven has sent its angel, to lose the prison-bands and open wide the gates; she was sure the dreams were whispers to her soul by Providence, and she felt confident that when her husband was engaged at work, his mind would cease to dwell absorbingly upon his patent, and then all would be in order.

## CHAPTER XVI.

### THE INVENTOR'S NEW EMPLOYMENT.

WHEN Paul Lorrayne called at Salisbury House the following morning with his plans and diagrams, he found the Sluggard looking, if possible, more sleek and comfortable than usual. There was no cold wind to irritate the corners of his eyes—he was rather impatient of a north-east wind—and the soft air was so pleasant and agreeable that it was almost impossible for anyone, let alone an easy-going sluggard, not to feel its influence. The morning papers were by his side, but he was not reading them; for after he had culled the news—the telegrams, the money-market, and other facts or supposed facts—he troubled himself little as to the

opinions held by any journal. The absolute news he liked to know ; but he formed his own opinions, and did not care for second-hand ones ; so that when Paul walked up the gravel path, he was quite ready for conversation.

The faithful Mrs. Peabody had placed a small writing-table and a chair near her master ; and all was ready for chronicling the narrative of Mr. Midass, directly he thought proper to unfold it. To show the natural goodness of the man, it may be mentioned, that so soon as he saw the plans in the hand of his visitor, he requested that they might be interpreted to him. Except for the comfortable look upon his face, he might have been likened to a fat Pharaoh, asking Joseph to be so good as to interpret a dream for him ; but then Lorraine could not in any way be compared to Joseph, inasmuch as he was about to interpret his own dream and not his master's ; and it does not need to say, that he longed for nothing better, than to speak of the great subject which engrossed his mind.

As he unrolled the hallowed paper which would at one fell swoop—at least he hoped so—bring sheer conviction to the intelligent mind of Mr. Midass, he became aware that the rather evil eye of Mrs. Peabody was peering at him from a window. Yes, there she was, as large as life; and he found it difficult to unroll his plan and prepare for explanation, under the snakelike look of the good though slovenly woman.

“Is Mrs. Peabody looking at us?” said the Sluggard; who, although he was not gifted with the eyes of Argus, knew by intuition what was happening.

“I thought I saw someone. It may have been your servant—perhaps it was,” said Paul.

“What are you staring at us for—have you no work to do, Mrs. Peabody?” called out the Sluggard loudly.

The good woman—for she was good in many ways—had plenty of work to do, and, indignant though she felt, she set about doing it.

The snakelike eyes being thus withdrawn,



Paul unrolled the plan and began his description. Happy moment! His tongue, which for many a day had kept long silence on the subject, was loosed again; and now it glibly told the cherished story. He pointed out the furnace, the flues, the intersecting passages and pipes, through which the hot air would be forced; and, by the power of the blast, render hard the bricks. He showed how quickly it would all be done—how mass after mass would be burnt and ready for use, and how the old system would in a few short years, or months perhaps, be as a tale that is told, as a thing forgotten.

There sat the Sluggard, smoking and listening; and there stood the inventor, talking as fast as he could talk. Well might Mrs. Peabody have been curious on the subject. Could a philosopher have observed the pair, he might have seen a picture of the world indeed—a strong comparison of how we treat our own affairs and those of others. Yes, the quick, intelligent, far-seeing man may burn with eager ardour to make his fellow-man the partner of his grand idea—his masterly invention; and the

listener, what may he do? Why sit still quietly with half attention. Sit, with cool and cynical indifference perhaps, and careless of the other's ardent hopes. It is the world, it is the way we live, and it will ever be so; unless the time should come when by wholesome discipline and education, and by the aid of Providence, we learn to feel each other's interests—to hang upon each other's hopes and fears.

“If you will stop a moment I will refill my pipe,” said the listener; who could smoke and listen without injury to either occupation. “Don't hurry yourself,” he added; “there's plenty of time.”

Plenty of time! Was there plenty of time? thought the inventor. The world was sliding—the end of all things was rushing on them—and mankind was losing the benefit of the patent. No, there was not plenty of time; but of course the listener must in his turn be listened to, and so Paul Lorraine checked his volubility, and went on somewhat slower.

The explanations were illustrated by detailed

opinions from scientific men—for many an engineer had spoken favourably of the patent—and at length the inventor almost stopped his narrative; partly from want of breath, partly because, for the time, the subject seemed exhausted.

The Sluggard turned his head and listened. Outside the gate he could just see and hear a knife-grinder at his wheel; and then he looked at the dreamer by his side—the practical and the impractical; the man of work and the man of theory. And yet there was a time when the treadle for the grinder's wheel did not exist. The friends of the inventor of the treadle thought him, perhaps, an idle loon for wasting time over new-fangled dodges.

No, this poor fellow by his side was quite entitled to all sympathy; but the Sluggard, as he acknowledged this, could not but feel that the invention, if it had the germ within it of success, was not in its present form by any means completed.

“I hope I have been able to make myself understood, Mr. Midass,” said Paul.

“Yes, I have followed you; and, so far as I

can see, there is considerable ability shown in your design ; but I am a practical man, although in one sense an idle one, and I can see that at present it is a long way from completion. You will not, in my opinion, be able to force the hot air through the clay with force enough to do the work. The power required to do this will blow your mass of unburnt bricks in all directions, and while you are collecting the pieces, as it were, you will have to rearrange your process."

Poor inventor! His tongue itched, his fingers itched, his whole body itched, to point out and prove by still more powerful words and details, to this stupid Sluggard, how dense he was. But no, the Sluggard was a good sluggard; nor was he stupid. He must be borne with, and long-tried patience must be tried again.

"I am afraid I have wearied you. I should have been fewer with my words," said Paul.

"No; I have been interested. Words, if they interest me, are as pleasant as a very distant band of music—they just tickle my senses without causing irritation."

Grateful though he was; thankful though he had every cause to be; Paul Lorrayne could not help glancing at the man beside him with a look almost of anger. Tickled his senses indeed! Yes, he was a nice subject for tickling. But to compare his flow of rhetoric, his words of absorbing wisdom, to a distant band of music, well— Paul did not pursue the current of his thoughts, but with a sigh rolled up his plans again.

“Ah, you sigh,” said Mr. Midass; “you would no doubt wish me to fall into ecstasies, and think of nothing else but brickmaking. Have patience; your patent shall not want my calm consideration. And now as to my narrative; are you good at composition?”

“The power of stringing words together in tricky forms; the gift of rounding off my phrases? No, sir, I fear not.”

“Neither have I,” said Mr. Midass; “but perhaps a plain blunt style will be the most attractive. How can I begin?”

“Were your parents poor but honest? Would that do to begin with?”

“It would not,” said the fat Sluggard, with a slight frown upon his comely face. “Of my mother I knew little; of my father I would rather not speak; for he was neither poor nor honest.”

“I was early thrown upon my own resources, and my name is—— I don’t know your christian-name, but whatever it may be; would that do?”

“That would do better—yes, put that down, it can be altered afterwards. My name is John Midass, and I was a boy remarkable for my lonely habits and powers of observation. That will do nicely I think?”

“Yes, I should say that would do.”

“I was allowed to do exactly what I liked from infancy, and I took care to do it.”

“‘Took care to do it,’” repeated Paul, writing down the words.

“I went from school to school; and as nobody would keep me long, I was under a great variety of schoolmasters.”

“‘Variety of schoolmasters,’” repeated Paul.

“This enabled me, while yet a boy, to see

and note the difference in human nature at the schools I went to. Most boys, when they leave school, know nothing of the world; I learnt a good deal of it, and I always made it a practice to think and act for myself. I got a great many whippings."

"'Great many whippings'—yes."

"They did me good in one way—they confirmed my independent spirit; but as they generally resulted from dislike, I had my *quid pro quo* in being more unmanageable, and thus I was expelled from every school I went to."

"'School I went to'—yes; and you then——" suggested Paul.

"Remained at home," continued Mr. Midass. "I remained in my father's house, and was brought in contact with ruffians and bad characters of all sorts; I watched them, and learnt a great deal from doing so. Their schemes, their frauds, their debaucheries were talked of in my presence; and as a listener and looker-on, I saw the folly of their ways, and hated them."

“ ‘ And hated them.’ ”

“ When my father died I was alone in the world, but as I was of age at the time of his death I took at once the small residue after clearing off his liabilities—for he had large debts—and started on my own path. It was now that my powers of observation, my independent reading, and my knowledge of the human mind stood me in good stead, and I set myself to work to build a fortune. There was at this time a strong rumour of a war with a great continental power; everyone thought that war was certain. I watched; I had studied the characters of the Ministry, and although they talked of war, I felt that it was talk, and talk only; and taking advantage of the low prices induced by the war rumours, I bought as largely as my credit would allow, and ultimately made a very handsome sum. Then when public confidence was restored, I saw that there would be irritation felt abroad at the policy our Ministry had held at home, and believing in a fall of prices, I now sold heavily. Again



there were rumours of a war, with a fair chance of its being forced upon us; so that the fall in prices which I had looked for was brought about, and I was able to buy in to cover my sales, and thus to make a good profit from the difference."

"From the difference,'" said Paul, scribbling away as fast as possible.

"There is nothing new in speculation," continued the Sluggard; "but in my case there is this to be noted: I acted entirely from my observation; my estimate of the characters of those in power; my general view of the political situation. If I had done as most men are so fond of doing—read the opinions of the papers, the money articles, hung upon the opinions of the Stock Exchange, and allowed my own intelligence to be absorbed by others—I should have stumbled from one decision to another, and should probably have lost what I had got; but, as it were, by looking from a height, I took the situation in correctly and made my money." Mr. Midass stopped at this point, and

turned his eyes towards the side-path, along which his gardener's daughter would be shortly passing ; for it was now the hour when she took her father's luncheon to him. There was no one ; so he gave his mind to reminiscences.

“ I make money on the turf too,” he continued, “ not by a knowledge of horses, or what are the powers of one against another ; but by my knowledge of the world, my knowledge of man's mind, my estimation of the owner of a racehorse. I once made a large sum in this way. The owner of a celebrated horse had entered him for one of our chief prizes, and long before the race the public backed him heavily. By repute I knew something of the owner, and soon learnt more about him. The knowledge I thus gained convinced me that he would not submit to be forestalled in the market, and would therefore not allow his horse to run. Holding this view I laid heavily against the animal, and I was right.

“ Disgusted at not being able to realise his hopes, and get his money on his horse to suit his

views, he cancelled his engagement, and by the laws of betting I won my money. Many a knowing one, many a man conversant with horse-racing for years, had lost large sums ; but such men trusted to their knowledge of the horse, the state of the betting, and ignored their knowledge of the human animal." When this paragraph was finished, the Sluggard turned his eyes again towards the garden-path ; and this time he saw the figure of the young girl, hastening along with her quiet modest look and action, upon her usual errand. The plain simple dress, the fair pale face, the eyes which looked to neither right nor left, and that expression which lights the face of those who are intent upon their duty—all this was again apparent to Mr. Midass. The great simplicity of the girl's demeanour attracted him, and he watched her as long as he could do so without turning completely round. "There are some few persons in the world who have a strange interest for us," he said to Paul, who had raised his eyes to note the cause of the other's abstraction ; "that girl is one who interests

me greatly," he added; "every footfall seems to tell of order, propriety, gentleness, and filial love. It is not the beauty of her features, although no doubt they are fair, but it is something in her nature which speaks in every line and movement. And then her voice is in keeping. There is something almost puritanical about it; but it is sweetness itself."

Paul Lorrayne looked at the Sluggard with curious eyes; his mind was partly bent upon his patent and partly on the narrative, and he said nothing; but it flashed upon him that Mr. Midass—who had probably steered himself with safety between many a Scylla and Charybdis—would fall upon the rock of love, if he was not careful.

"She makes the best of everything, with quiet ease and grace. The short dress shows the thick and clumsy boots; but in every crease of them there is something which tells one that the feet they hold belong to one of nature's chosen." The Sluggard made these remarks to himself, although he uttered them aloud; and after smoking his pipe

in silence for two or three minutes, he intimated that for the morning the narrative must cease. "Mind you," he said to Lorryne, "what I am asking you to write is with no view to publication; no one would care to hear my story, and few would see the point in it; but I shall like to have it upon record. When I am old, and my mind is less acute than now, it would be pleasant to refer to it; for I shall live again perhaps in clearly understanding what I was. The senile mind gets stiff and rusty; but the written production of its former self, may act as oil to lubricate it. True, I may read it with indifference perhaps, if I should live; but the impressions of middle-age, when the judgment is mature, will probably impress and interest me."

"It seems to me biographies are most instructive," said Paul. "The successful man, who has chosen to keep himself unknown, will show how power and wealth may be obtained, while still retaining the obscurity which suits him."

"And in autobiography there is this," said Mr. Midass: "that to gratify himself, a man will

probably give the impress of his mind, his views, and his experiences, with all the truth he can; while the story of him which is written by another, will cease to be a true one. It will be the actual writer's mind which will be there, and not that of him whose history is being written."

"Just so," said Paul, glad that he could catch the Sluggard's meaning, and hold with it. "Yes," he added, "the simple story of some poor man, who writes it down in the hope of benefiting his fellows, will linger on the memory and read a lesson, when the carefully-composed life of some great one who has passed away, and which some man of talent writes for him, will hardly dwell within our thoughts."

It was thus that these two men, known to each other for so short a time, exchanged their views. Those of the elder man resulted from calm and educated observation; those of the younger from observation and experience also; but such as had been forced on him by many a bitter stroke of evil fortune. And yet Fortune was not to blame. Who

should find fault and grumble, if she buffets the inventor, and the man who would unfold her hidden secrets? The man of science may think it hard that he, who courts her with all his energy and his life's best days, should meet with frowns and evil treatment; but the fair goddess knows the best, and when the time has come she will advance, hand in hand with Nature, and make a stately curtsy to her wooer.

Before they separated, Mr. Midass told Paul the terms on which he should retain him as his scribe. He explained that it would not be only as his scribe that he should want him, but as a messenger. That he had often matters connected with his property and investments, which he should be glad to deal with by message in place of writing; and it had, he said, been long within his mind to look for some man of education and refined address, who could understand his meaning, and make it known to others. The terms proposed were not lavish ones—indeed they were very moderate; for Mr. Midass felt that for the present the services of his *protégé*

were not worth much ; but he held out hopes of an increase ; and to Lorryne's mind the pay which he was offered, was as though the Bank of England had unlocked her coffers, requesting him to be so good as to walk in and help himself.

“ You need not thank me,” said Mr. Midass ; “ if you did but know it, I am as much, or more indebted to you, than you are to me. Good-morning ; you will be here to-morrow at the same hour ?” And rising from his seat with his long pipe relighted, the calm and easy-going man strolled off to find his gardener ; and perhaps—who knows ?—to catch another glance at “ sweet simplicity,” and “ nature's chosen.”



## CHAPTER XVII.

### THE MAN SHE LOVED.

WE must return to Woodleigh; for the course of our story leads us there, and it is as well to be in order. The visit of Ethel Lorrayne to her friends at Brighton was over, and she was again with her aunt and uncle. Much as she disliked the sunny glare, and windy dryness of the great watering-place; much as she hated the crowded pavements, where vulgarity flaunted in all its odious shapes; she had a special reason for joy at her return to the quiet sweetness of the country, and the wholesome solid comfort of her uncle's house. To tell the truth—and there can be no object in concealing it—the

young lady wished to meet once more the man she loved, and had so much respect for—the Rev. Simon Small.

Mr. Small had of course an equal wish to see Miss Ethel; but men in his position generally have to wait, and they get so used to it, that a little more or less, has but small effect upon them. Mr. Small had indeed no cause to grumble. That he freely owned; for he was one of those who usually seem born expressly to be snubbed. His father had had sufficient means to give his son an entry to the Church; but when he died, he had left his family with naught beyond his blessing.

No covert sneer is here intended; for the dying love and blessing of a Christian man, may prove of value far beyond the gift of money, and may, and has—for all we know, in many and many a case—guarded and covered like a shield the heads of the bereaved ones. Perhaps it was the memory of his father, perhaps the spiritual direction of his parent

as a guardian angel, which had kept him to a steady sense of duty; and 'had prompted him to take his quiet curacy, where he did all the work and the rector all the fault-finding. Whatever was the cause, our curate had worked patiently and well, and a rich recompense had been in store for him. Who would have thought that the quiet Simon, the long-walking, sick-visiting, simple-looking creature, would have ever dared to raise his eyes to the niece of that great potentate, the squire of Woodleigh? No one would have thought it; and in fact he didn't do it, until, by force of circumstance, he had found there was no help for it.

It has been told that Ethel was one of those who like retirement, and thought it hard to be obliged at times to join the usual county gatherings. In fact Miss Ethel was not, in one sense, unlike Simon Small himself; for she too loved the visit to the sick man's bed, to read the words of hope to this old woman or to that. She loved the homely ways of the poor<sup>r</sup>

village folks; to make the little children frocks and pinafores; or knit warm stockings for the parents. Yes, she loved the poor, and the poor returned her love; a fact which brought more pleasure to her mind, than if she were the reigning belle of all the balls or tennis meetings. In another way, however, she was somewhat different from her lover, for she had by nature, much more native shrewdness than had fallen to his lot. They both enjoyed a harmless joke; but Ethel had a sense of fun, which sees the joke while yet a long way off, and scents the ludicrous before it fully shows itself.

The Rev. Simon had not this intuition. When something funny dawned upon him, and fully stared him in the face, he too would be much amused, and his loud happy laugh would by contagion and by its hearty ring, set his companion laughing also; but he saw the serious side of human nature before the other side—the droll one.

In the letter to her aunt which has been

given to the reader, it has been mentioned how that a proposal had been made by Mr. Small, to put an end to love's delay, and to leave the pleasant shades of Woodleigh, for the more money-getting post of missionary to the Fiji Islanders. Fond as Ethel Lorrayne was of her reverend lover, she was not prepared to follow him to islands, where she had heard that the hungry cannibal holds his dreadful orgies.

No; if she had her way, she would willingly join her lot to his, and live in the humblest cottage, and upon the plainest fare, in Merry England; but go out to the Fiji Islands she would not—nothing should induce her; and what was more, she had no intention of letting her lover go either. Not that he would want to go if she remained behind; but still he might feel that he had a call to do so; and in that way he might try to take his departure; for he was one of those who, when they hold that duty calls them, will, whether right or wrong, go headlong at it. Such men may not be common. Indeed

it may be doubted whether they are not very few and far between; but still they do exist, and Simon Small was one of them. Let him get a craze into his quiet-looking head, that he ought to go and tutor the Fiji Islanders, and he would start by the first convenient vessel that would give him passage.

Ethel had determined to answer her lover's proposal in a personal interview, and the day following her return to Woodleigh, she started for a walk, in a direction where she was almost sure to meet him. If she did not meet him on the road, she would assuredly see him at the schools; for he held, and very wisely, that the teacher often requires looking after, quite as much as does his pupil; and so, as she did not chance to come across him on the road, she made her way towards the school-house. Yes, there he was, listening to the stupid answers of the scholars, and the almost equally stupid questions of the mistress, with quiet interest, when she opened the door and entered to him. The tall, pale, gentle-looking man, could not

prevent a cry of joy so full and hearty, that the children, who, although they liked him, ridiculed him, tittered audibly. The schoolmistress too, who knew that the curate and Miss Ethel were "keeping company," watched them with eager eyes; and in fact wondered at what she considered the young lady's impudence, in coming after her young man, during the solemn hours of tuition. It was a pretty state of things, she thought—and she did not scruple to tell her thought at the tea-table that evening—that a great strapping wench like the squire's niece should flounce in as bold as brass after that poor noodle Mr. Small. Why couldn't she let the poor man be? It was scandalous! The very children saw what she was at. She only wished the rector knew of it: he'd give the curate a talking to, if he ever did to anyone.

But it is not with this good woman's line of thought that our story has to do: it is, for the present at least, with the young man and woman, who loved each other with all the fresh disinterestedness of their natures.

Ethel's colour was considerably heightened as she returned Mr. Small's greetings; but she was not going to show confusion or shyness before the prying schoolmistress; so she looked up frankly and boldly as she did so.

"I came back by the express yesterday," she said, in answer to Mr. Small. "My aunt wishes to see you about poor old Mrs. Abbott; she won't take her medicine, and my aunt wants you to tell her how sinful it is to refuse nice medicine."

The Rev. Simon did not, in the simplicity of his nature, see through the young lady's ruse to get him from the schoolroom; and he looked at her with blank wonder in his face.

"Refuse to take nice medicine!" he repeated.

"Yes," said Ethel, breaking into an open smile, while the children laughed and sniggered. "She says it does her more harm than good. So will you come and talk to my aunt—when you have time?" she added, with the faintest touch of sarcasm in her tone at the other's slowness.

"I will come now—I will come at once. There



is nothing to keep me," said Mr. Small. "You will see that the children practise the fifty-seventh hymn, Mrs. Tompkins?" he added to the school-mistress. "And if they could reduce the nasal twang a little, it would be better. If they could realise the effect of it, I think they would strive against it. It might be done in this way, Mrs. Tompkins. They might hold their noses with one hand, and their books with the other, and sing a verse or two. Then letting go their noses, they might sing another verse, and hear how much better the effect was. You understand my meaning, Mrs. Tompkins; it could be done in this way—so;" and the curate, by way of illustration, held his long nose with a finger and thumb, and hummed a line or two.

At this remarkable lecture on the art of producing vocal music, there was only one person in the room who seemed to take it in sober earnest, and that was Mrs. Tompkins. The children grinned cheerfully, and commenced without loss of time to put the recipe in practice; and as to Ethel—she turned her back and disappeared.

“Good-morning, Mrs. Tompkins,” said the curate, who was so accustomed to the children’s merriment that he saw nothing peculiar in it, and indeed liked it; “I will practise the fifty-seventh with you this afternoon, and we will try my plan.” And putting on his orthodox round hat, he left the building.

“So you have come back to me at last, Ethel!” he said, so soon as they were upon the road together; “the suspense I have endured was enough to kill me, you naughty girl.”

“Don’t talk nonsense, Simon; how could I answer your letter when it was all about Fiji?” said the girl, looking at the man with her bright fun-seeing eyes. “And tell me this, sir: why did you try and make me laugh in the schoolroom?”

“Make you laugh, Ethel! Did I make you laugh? It’s not often I say anything witty.”

“If you could have seen yourself holding your nose, and looking so innocent all the time! You really will kill me with laughing some day, you will indeed.” And drawing upon her memory for a

reproduction of the scene, the girl laughed quite as loudly as a young lady ought to laugh.

Mr. Small stood looking at her with blank astonishment ; but at last it dawned upon him, that holding the nose might possibly be ludicrous ; and from that point he got to see that it actually was so ; and, having made this discovery, he stood still and laughed too—not in the quiet though hearty way which Miss Ethel adopted, but with a loud and sonorous haw, haw, haw ! Yes, there he stood, laughing ; until Ethel Lorryne began to be quite ashamed of the noise he was making.

“Do stop, Simon,” she said ; “here is an old woman coming—it’s Mrs. Snubbins—you know how she talks.”

“Singing and holding their n—no—noses ; haw, haw, haw !” roared the reverend man, who was ashamed of nothing that he did.

“Simon—I won’t walk with you if you make that noise ; do speak to Mrs. Snubbins !”

The good woman who was coming towards them, was one of those open-eyed, high-coloured, firm-

mouthed old women, who not only have tempers of their own, but very long tongues ; and although she dropped the usual curtsy, her looks said as plainly as they dared, that such goings-on upon the public highroad, ought to be reported to his lordship the bishop. Scandalous ! quite scandalous ! was in every line of her healthy-looking face ; and as the curate made a sign to her to stop, she stopped accordingly, and looked from one to the other.

“ You don’t often hear me laughing so loud as this, do you, Mrs. Snubbins ? ” said Mr. Small, whose calm manner at length returned to him.

“ No, I don’t, sir ; you generally behave yourself like a pattern—leastways in public. I don’t know what you gets up to behind folks’ backs,” she added in a sort of stage-whisper.

“ I am not ashamed of laughing ; indeed I would willingly promote harmless merriment if I knew how.”

“ You be best judge, sir,” said the good woman ; using a form of words which she felt was incorrect ;

“you be best judge; but I knows what St. Paul says—leastways what you read in choorch.”

“What is that, Mrs. Snubbins?” said Ethel, who feared the woman would be too much for them.

“‘If any won is merry let ’un zing psalms,’” said Mrs. Snubbins; “and werry good advice too, I reckons,” she added.

“Well, I was talking of trying to improve our singing of psalms, or rather hymns,” said the truthful curate; “and therefore I was carrying out St. Paul’s advice, in a certain measure. If we should happen to sing or do something in a funny manner, St. Paul does not say we mustn’t laugh.”

“No, he don’t, sir—I must own that; but to my way o’ thinking, singing psalms and laarfing don’t hold no ’greement like.”

“Very well, Mrs. Snubbins. Perhaps I may allude to the subject in a future sermon, and then, if you keep awake, you will know the proper way to understand St. Paul. Good-morning. By-the-

bye, your grandson was not in the choir last Sunday. We must have regularity, you know."

"Ah," muttered the old woman as she walked on, "Teddy played truant from quire, but I'm bothered if he'd stand an' laaf as loud as you."

"And now, Simon, we must really behave rationally. Can you walk across the park with me?"

Could [he? Here was a question. Could he climb the church spire? Could he swim the lake in full canonicals? Could he do anything that man had ever dared to do? Ah, that he could, to please the pretty girl who walked beside him; and who, if she would but consent to go with him to the Fiji Islands, would be his wife.

They walked quietly and happily along the shady lanes, and at length they reached the lodge-gate and entrance to the park. There was no need to hurry, and they didn't; there was no need to be otherwise than loving, and they weren't; there was no earthly reason why they should not stop and linger beneath the clump of lime-trees, so they

stopped and lingered; and then it was that Mr. Small, carried away by his pleasurable feelings, gave utterance to the thoughts which filled his mind. "Let me look at you, dearest," he said, placing a full-sized hand upon each shoulder of the loved one; "let me look at those beautiful, dark, big, liquid, dreamy, staring orbs. I suppose there never was——"

"Now, Simon," said the girl, with a merry laugh; "don't be such a goose. I shall call you *Simple* Simon. You won't mind, will you? It's a capital name for you. I shall expect to see you meeting a pieman; I shall indeed."

"What a funny, amusing, witty creature you are, Ethel—'Simple Simon met a pieman!'" And the harmless little joke taking hold of the good man's mind, he laughed again as loudly as before.

"Don't make such a noise; people will hear you ever so far off," said Ethel. "Besides, I want to talk seriously."

"About the Fiji Islands, Ethel?"

"Fiji Islands! No, sir. The fact is, my aunt

has had a letter about my Cousin Paul. You have never seen him, have you?"

"Yes, I have seen him. He was here occasionally when I first came."

"But you knew nothing of him?"

"Nothing, except that he seemed an amiable lad, and was fond of mechanics and carpentering. I believe your uncle did not like him?"

"No, Uncle Charles hates him; and, so far as I can see, with very little reason."

"Your uncle considers him a foolish perverse young man, does he not?"

"Yes, and it makes my aunt very unhappy; because he is no worse than other people—certainly no worse than you, dear Simon, with your Fiji Islands."

"The climate there is splendid, Ethel. But about your Cousin Paul—why has his name cropped up just now?"

"Because my uncle has had a letter from a Mr. Westdale, with dreadful accounts about my cousin. Poor fellow! it seems that he has been



almost starving, and has not known who to apply to. So at last Mr. Westdale wrote to Uncle Charles, and told him that Paul and his family were literally starving—actually dying for want of food.”

“How very dreadful. If I had known that I might have got him some food at any rate.”

Ethel Lorryne looked at the tall gaunt man beside her with her penetrating eyes. He was not ugly, and he was not handsome; but every hair upon his head seemed to tell of his kindly simple nature. It was neat hair, although but little time was spent in combing it, and the ends ran together in points and clusters, forming, as it were, something resembling spikes. There was no shrewdness in his eyes, for they were gentle as a cow's; but for all his mild appearance, there was in his long lathy figure and wiry look, something which told of physical firmness and courage. He looked, to her mind, like a man who, if some bold self-sacrificing action wanted doing—some deed where calm and honest pluck was wanted—was just the creature

who would step forward, and, without a word of fuss or conscious pride, would quietly prepare for it.

Ethel felt too—and she was mainly in the right—that his simple mind, which only saw the better side of human nature, was a better guide, a safer prop to lean on, than the dashing shrewdness of your men who know the world.

He was a man, she thought, who, put him where you would and how you would, could not but walk in wisdom's simple path. He might toil on and do his duty all his life in utter ignorance that Fortune had rich gifts to lavish.

What if he did—was he not happy? Ah, who so happy as the simple guileless creatures who know no evil, think no evil! Even by the fickle goddess they are sometimes noticed; and in her sportive fancy she will heap up riches and rewards upon them, which make them none the happier.

And surely good fortune was smiling freely now upon Simon Small. This handsome, clever, merry girl, was a prize which any man might covet; and yet her choice had fallen on himself. Did he want

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a living? No, the Fiji Islands would do for him, so long as Ethel would go with him. The man in truth was happy, as such men generally are, for they have contentment; and with contentment, we have a recipe for as much happiness, as this world can give us.

“You give away almost everything you have got, Simon,” said Ethel.

“Oh dear no; but of course I haven’t much to give. So this poor cousin of yours is almost starving?”

“He *has* been. My uncle would listen to no appeal in his behalf; but my aunt has been able to send him a small sum. What she wants is this—she wants you to go and see him.”

“I will go with pleasure; is it a long journey? Where does he live—or rather starve, I suppose I ought to say?”

“He is near London. I wish I could go with you; but that wouldn’t do, would it?”

“Of course you would know much better what to say to your cousin than I should.”

“You don’t see my meaning, Simon. I suppose we must wait till we go to the—Fiji—Islands—before we travel together. There’s a deal of humbug in the world, isn’t there?”

“I suppose there is,” said the simple-looking pointed-haired curate.

“My aunt wants someone to go and see my cousin, and to find out exactly how they are situated. She thinks my uncle would agree to some assistance if you were to go up. You see the letter we had about him was from a perfect stranger.”

“I will go with pleasure, if I have enough ready money to pay my fare. My hens are laying well just now. I can take some new-laid eggs in a basket; there is nothing like eggs for nourishment, and they require so little trouble to get them down.”

“Suppose you give him the very coat off your back, the shoes off your feet? I really believe you would, Simon; I do indeed.”

Thus, walking slowly onwards, pausing occa-

sionally to look at the landscape or each other, and turning over in their minds how they might best give their assistance to the needy, they reached the lawn before the house. Although loath to leave his companion, Simon Small felt considerable reluctance to enter the garden, for he saw the squire walking up and down upon the terrace, and by the quick way he swung his stick and strode along, it was plain he was not in the best of humours.

Mr. Lorrayne always held the curate to be the poorest of poor creatures, and the very fact of no resentment being taken to his often rough remarks, was a source of aggravation to him. But in truth, whatever source the curate might have taken, it would have been much the same—he would have been looked upon as a wretched booby, and consequently treated as one; so hard is it to some men to treat the needy and the simple-minded with respect.

“Your uncle won’t like my being here, Ethel,” said Simon; “the last time I called on parish matters, he said he thought I was doing more harm than good.”

“Poor dear uncle! And yet if he only knew how your goodness often mends the harm he does, he would be so different. But you are not afraid of him, dear Simon; fear has no part in your nature.”

“No, Ethel; I am not afraid of anyone that I am aware of—and yet,” he added, fearing that he might be speaking boastfully, “perhaps I am. I certainly don’t like meeting your uncle sometimes, and the feeling may be akin to fear—perhaps it is—I hope not, for I should despise myself if I feared the wrath of any fellow-creature, when I am acting only as I see the light.”

“He has caught sight of us, Simon—you must come now, or he will think that my heroic Simon is running away from him,” said the girl, laughing.

Yes, the old man had caught sight of his niece, and as he did so, a sensation of a disagreeable nature passed through him from head to foot; for he also saw who her companion was. As to his niece, he loved her; for she was young and well-favoured, and used that pleasant badinage when talking with

him, which, in a way, both flattered and amused him. But to see her with this long-legged, straight-haired, placid-looking curate; well knowing, as he did, that their companionship meant love; was more than he could stand with cool indifference.

Seeing the pair approaching, he planted his stick firmly on the gravel path in front of him, placed his glasses on his nose, tilted his hat upon his eyebrows, and prepared at any rate to speak his mind.

"There you are, Ethel," he said; "I have been looking for you to go with me to the farm. There is a pony I want you to see. But of course it is too late this morning, for it is luncheon-time."

"I have been to the school, uncle. I wanted to see Mr. Small; partly on my own account and partly on my aunt's," said the girl; with a quiet twinkle of fun in her eye.

Saucy baggage, to say this to his face! thought the uncle.

"Well, now that he is here, perhaps it will suit Mr. Small to take his luncheon with us," said the

old man ; partly to himself and partly at the gentleman's curate. But it is impossible to give offence when none will be taken ; and so Simon Small consented to eat his midday meal there.

When this had been despatched, Mrs. Lorrayne invited her guest to go with her, for the inspection of some poultry which she fondly hoped would take a prize at the county show.

Mr. Small was supposed to be learned in the rearing of cocks and hens, for he kept a stock of them ; and by prizes, and in one way and another, he made something over and above their keep ; so that his opinion was one which might really be asked with confidence. But the poultry question was not really in Mrs. Lorrayne's mind ; what she wished to speak about was this—whether he, as a good, kind creature, would go to the Great Babylon, and from there to Windslow, in quest of Paul Lorrayne.

“ It's a long journey, I know, Mr. Small,” she said, after the cocks and hens had been inspected but paid little attention to ; “ it's a long journey,



but I am so anxious to know something further. Not that I could do much for them without my husband's consent!"

"If they are starving, or nearly so, of course it will be useless to go unless something can be done. I can take them a basket of new-laid eggs. I shouldn't in the least mind carrying a basket full of eggs," said the poultry-loving man; whose face, if it resembled any animal's, favoured that of a chicken more than another. "And I could take a couple of fowls, which I am sure would be very tender."

"There will be no need for that, thank you," said Mrs. Lorrayne; "although it is very kind of you to think of it. What I should wish you to do would be this: just to go to Windslow, make your way to the house, and see for yourself. You will be able to form an opinion, will you not?"

"I will do my best, Mrs. Lorrayne."

"I am sure you will. When can you start?"

"I had better start on Monday by the parliamentary train."

“No, no; you must go by the express and come back by it. You will let me pay the fare, of course, Mr. Small?”

“Yes,” said the curate, who knew that anything spent out of his small means would be so much taken from his charitable gifts or his tiny savings for furnishing; “yes, I will take my fare from you, Mrs. Lorrayne; and, as to food, a couple of the eggs which I shall take up and a piece of bread will make me a very good midday meal.”

It was thus settled that the Rev. Simon should go to London by the morning express, and, having arrived there, should further go on to Windsor, and to the dwelling where Paul Lorrayne and his family had suffered so much from want.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### SIMON SMALL'S TRIP TO WINDSLOW.

WHEN Mr. Small arrived at Waterloo, he had only to cross the station to get into a train for Windsor. This town being reached, he asked his way to Laurel Cottage, the abode of Mr. Westdale. He was told, and truly so, that it was half a mile from the station, and that if he went to The Bull, and then took the right-hand road as far as The Three Magpies, he would see a public-house called The Dun Cow. Well, he was not to turn down by the latter institution, but was to keep straight on, when he would see a beershop called The Duke of York; when this desirable house was reached, Laurel Cottage would be about two

hundred yards farther on. The directions given by the station porter were very clear; but it was also clear to Simon Small that licensed victuallers must be pretty numerous in the neighbourhood. There was no difficulty in finding any of the public-houses, but before he could hit upon Laurel Cottage he was obliged to ask again. If it had been previously described, and an account of the gay borders and clustering roses had been given him, there would have been no difficulty in making a selection from the neighbouring dwellings; but as it was he was obliged to inquire; and seeing Mr. Midass at the entrance-gate to Salisbury House, smoking his fragrant pipe, he went up to him and asked for the desired information.

“I am looking for Laurel Cottage, sir. Can you direct me?” he said.

“That is Laurel Cottage, the one with the white roses over the door,” said the Sluggard, going out into the road, and pointing with the stem of his pipe. “Mr. Westdale is not at home at this hour,” he added.

“I wanted information as to where I may find Mr. Paul Lorrayne, who I am told lives in this neighbourhood. He is known to Mr. Westdale, I believe.”

“I can direct you to Mr. Lorrayne’s cottage at once,” said the Sluggard; wondering what might be the business of the tall and placid-looking curate. “You will have to follow this road for half a mile, and you will find a turning to the left usually called ‘Cut-throat Lane.’ The cottage is about fifty yards along it.”

Cut-throat Lane was not a cheerful-sounding name, but the curate knew that it was not altogether an uncommon one in a country district, and he was therefore not surprised; so he thanked his informant and prepared to walk on. Upon second thoughts, which are generally supposed to be the best, but which are very often not so; he determined to try for a little more information. “You do not happen to know Mr. Paul Lorrayne, I suppose?” he said.

“I know him very well—he had just left my

house," said Mr. Midass; "it is almost a wonder you did not meet him here."

"If you know him intimately, perhaps I may be permitted to ask a few questions as to his welfare. I am a messenger from a lady who is deeply interested in him—his aunt in Gloucestershire."

"I can tell you this much," said Mr. Midass, going into the road again to see if the figure of Paul Lorryne was in the distance; "that he has employment sufficient for his present wants; further, I am not at liberty to say anything."

"I will hasten after him. I am glad at any rate to hear he is not in want, for I was afraid he might be," said Mr. Small; and swinging himself round to hasten on his way, a couple of the eggs which he had in his basket, managed to get loose and to fall upon the road. An egg is a thing which, when it is once broken, is incapable of being restored; and if it falls upon a road it can hardly be of much use; so merely glancing at the breakage to see if either egg contained a double yolk, our curate strode onwards.

He could see a figure in front of him, nearly half a mile ahead, and after a minute or two he could see that it had turned into another road—Cut-throat Lane, no doubt; so, putting his best leg foremost, he hastened on his way.

Yes, here he was at Cut-throat Lane, without a doubt; and there was the cottage he was seeking. The good man stood for a moment at the entrance of the lane, thinking why it was called Cut-throat? It was but little used apparently, and the grass which grew upon it was green and undisturbed; but no doubt, in days gone by, some tragedy had happened there. Perhaps two wretched creatures had in their quarrels striven for the mastery, and the conqueror had slit the other's weasand. Perhaps some hardened villain, or some murderer, unable to bear up against his burdened conscience, had sat beneath the high-grown hedge, and thought of all his guilt once more, and then had rid himself of life. Perhaps, again, some local wit, some merry tipster, had given it the name; because no public-house or beershop could be found

there. Whatever was the origin, it looked peaceful and neglected now; and, hastening on, Mr. Simon reached the cottage. There was no one in the garden, so he rapped his knuckles on the door.

“Yes,” said a voice inside.

“Does Mr. Paul Lorrayne live here?” said Simon Small.

This question, and the voice which asked it, were so unusual that Paul was quickly at the entrance and standing before the visitor.

For a moment the two men stood looking at each other without exchanging words. The curate saw at once that the man before him was one of striking presence, and with all the look of high intelligence upon his face; while Paul, as he read the other’s features, and noted his tall gaunt figure, set him down at once to be a kind good honest manly fellow, such as one would gladly trust.

“I am Paul Lorrayne,” he said, partly guessing that his visitor was from Woodleigh, from his country look, and from some sort of intuition.

“And I am Simon Small, curate of the parish



of Woodleigh, Gloucestershire," said Simon, putting down his basket of eggs and feeling in his pocket for a note which he had brought from Woodleigh Park.

"If you have come here on any sort of business, sir," said Paul, "perhaps we had better discuss it in the garden; my wife and children occupy our little sitting-room." He might have added that the chairs were few, and that his family were about to discuss the very homely fare which was indeed more than a feast to them; but had he known Simon Small better, no such consideration would have prevented an offer of hospitality, however poor.

"Perhaps you are engaged? I can call later in the day; I am in no hurry," said the curate, with that simple expression which had won him the love of many a poor parishioner.

"Oh no; I am sorry I have no place to ask you into; I will just get my hat, and we will talk in the garden;" and placing Westdale's old hat upon his head, Paul led the way along the path, and into the lane.

The two men sauntered quietly along Cutthroat Lane, and began their conversation. To see them together, one might have fancied that they had been old friends, so socially did they walk along; and indeed it seldom took long for anyone to get a feeling of confidence in the curate, for honesty and simplicity were stamped upon him, while his affectionate nature yearned towards those with whom he had to do.

“I have come from Woodleigh, with a note from your aunt,” he said.

“She could of course have sent it by post, and therefore you did not come wholly on that account; but I have already received kindness from my aunt, so doubtless you are here with some good motive.”

“She wishes to know something of you, something more than a mere letter can tell her; and she has sent me, because she did not know who else to send.”

Paul Lorrayne looked askance at the tall speaker, and almost loved him. He seemed so

unconscious of self, so indifferent to being a mere tool, so long as he could be of service; and here he was walking along Cut-throat Lane, with as much contentedness as though he were being fully entertained after his long journey.

“It is very good of you to come,” he said; stopping and facing the other, and looking him full in the face; “kindness is not so freely flung about nowadays, that we must take it below its value. I am so sorry I have no means of entertaining you, but doubtless you know something of my sad history.”

“Yes, Mrs. Lorrayne has told me that you have had bitter disappointments; but from what I have heard to-day, I hope you have weathered the storm; may I ask if it is so?”

“Who has told you anything of me?” said Paul, scanning his companion with curiosity, and wondering for the moment whether the man might not be some detective in disguise.

“A gentleman who lives some half a mile down the road, and of whom I inquired my way, directed

me here; and added that you had employment and were likely to do well."

"A stout good-looking man, with a pipe, and with slippers on his feet?"

"The same; he told me you lived in Cut-throat Lane," said Simon; "there is a Cut-throat Lane in my neighbourhood too, and it is one of the prettiest I know of," he added; smiling in kindly endeavour to give their talk a pleasant turn.

"And he has told you nothing more?"

"No; he said you had just left him, and that if I made haste I should catch you up; so I did make haste; but although I saw you I didn't catch you. Here is the note I have brought with me."

Paul took the missive from the curate's hand; it was as follows:

"WOODLEIGH: July, 187- .

"MY DEAR PAUL,

"Many years have passed without a meeting, and I have heard with deep regret that the industry and ability which I know you to possess have

hitherto been fruitless. Your uncle, with all the natural kindness of his nature, cannot forget that you have acted contrary to his advice and wishes, and therefore will do nothing for you. I can do but little; but that little shall be done; and it will at all events be something to know that I do not forget you, and hold a fervent pity in my heart for you, and such as you, who have misfortune to contend against. Your cousin Ethel who lives here, sends her love; and if she can assist in any way, by nursing or otherwise, would gladly go to you, no matter how plain your lodging. The bearer of this note is a man I have a deep respect for, for he is among the best and bravest of God's creatures; and, although he owns a manly courage, has a woman's heart.

“Tell him any little matter you may wish a confidant to know. He will not betray you, and will be the means of telling much of what I want to know of you and yours. Pray accept the enclosed. I wish it was a cheque for something handsome; but I have no banking credit, and

cannot at present make my offering larger. There is an old saying that 'Every dog has his day.' It is, I think, not without truth; and in like manner everyone has his opportunity—which is seized by some, by others thrown carelessly aside. You, Paul, are young; you have the Lorraine tenacity and pride, and you will hold fast to what you undertake. Sooner or later—later perhaps—success will crown your work; and recollect that your old aunt at Woodleigh, prays for you and bids you hope. Courage you have, ability you have also; be patient and wait your time, and you will prosper in the world.

“With my love, in which your Cousin Ethel joins,

“I am, your affectionate Aunt,

“ANNE LORRAYNE.”

As the recipient read the letter, he was somewhat moved, for to his mind there was a tone about it, which told of tenderness and goodness, not unmixed with worldly wisdom. It tallied too

in spirit, with the letter Mr. Westdale had received, and from which he had found much comfort. The enclosure was an order for a small sum, and as he put it with the letter in his pocket, he turned to his visitor to renew their conversation.

“And you have come all the way from Woodleigh to see me, and be the bearer of this kind letter?” he said.

“Oh, it is nothing; I enjoy the trip. To a man like me, a run up to London is a treat; it quite brushes me up,” said Simon.

It sounded truthful, and it was so; for what is so great a pleasure as an errand of mercy; a message of kindness? But the curate did not say that he had merely passed from one side of the London station to the other, and had seen nothing of the great metropolis, nor should do so. He did not say that he was going back as he had come, and had had no meal after his long journey. He did not tell that he had a hunch of bread in his pocket, which, with a couple of his eggs, if he could get them cooked, would be his midday meal. No, he

said nothing of all this; but he was fully as contented as a man may wish to be, for his hope of extra happiness was in the future. The handsome, clever, high-born girl was his in heart. He knew she loved him; and where could gift be found more powerful to promise joy, than this grand woman's love for him. He, the tall gaunt curate, with his ill-made village coat—the laughing-stock of many a county family, the ridiculed of many a country house—he to be the chosen one of her, who might doubtless marry almost anyone! She would not go to the Fiji Islands she had said; but perhaps she jested. If she was in earnest they must wait, and that he would do with patience.

“After reading this letter, and noting what my aunt says of you, I shall scruple no longer to ask you into our poor cottage. Do me the favour to go in, for I would introduce you to my wife; and you must make a luncheon on our simple fare, if you can do so,” said Paul; leading the way to the cottage.

“Thank you,” said Simon; “I should like to



see your wife ; and, as to plain fare, look here," he added, producing the hunch of dry bread. " People laugh at me ; but do you know I like a piece of stale bread as well as anything ; it tastes so clean, and I always feel so lively after it."

" Is that your basket on the doorstep ? "

" Yes ; it is a basket of fresh eggs. I keep a great many fowls, and I have brought Mrs. Lorrayne some of their produce, if she will kindly accept it," said Simon, taking up the basket and entering through the low-pitched doorway.

" This is Mr. Small, Minnie—my wife," said Paul, introducing the one to the other in a way which reminded the curate of the squire of Woodleigh's best manners. " He is the bearer of a very kind letter from my aunt—a letter which I am sure you will be glad to read."

Mrs. Lorrayne and Simon Small stood looking at each other for a moment with mutual regard. As to the former, it was impossible for any man of refinement to look at her with indifference ; but to such a one as Simon, she was sure to be an object

of admiration. Her high-bred features, her large clear good eyes, her hair braided so neatly, and her look of pale delicacy, were matters which woke in him both interest and pity; for he had heard something of her story from Ethel, and now saw how sad her condition must have been. On her part, Mrs. Lorrayne took in the nature of the curate, with all a woman's shrewdness and insight into character. She saw the simple ill-made coat, the pointed hair, the innocent guileless eyes, and the tall gaunt figure; and she knew that it contained a manly spirit, equally adapted for a soldier or a priest. The large hands too, folded as they were the one over the other, seemed just the sort that in a fair and needful fight could do good service; or smooth the pillow of the sick man's couch; or close the dying eyes with quiet gentleness. Mrs. Lorrayne was, and always had been, fond of thinking and talking about angels; and, as she looked at Simon, she knew not how it was, but she fancied in some way or other, he would be their good angel—a creature they could love and value as a brother. She soon

succeeded in making him feel both comfortable and at home, and some simple food was placed before him. But as to food, they were in this dilemma : Simon had his hunch of bread, which he wished to eat ; but if he did so, he feared his hostess would think him ostentatiously frugal in refusing her bread and cheese ; while she, on her part, dreaded to throw a seeming ridicule upon his bread by pressing what was on the table. The knotty point was solved at last, by Simon eating cheese with the Woodleigh bread, and while this was going on, he watched an opportunity to make a present of his eggs. The basket was placed upon the table, and they were accepted with as much pleasure as he felt in giving them.

“ I make quite a little fortune by my fowls,” said Simon ; “ you can’t think what an amusement they are to me. Sometimes I sell a pair of chickens to a lady, and she asks me to come and dine off them ; so that, you see, I have my pudding and eat it too, as it were.”

“ And your church, is it a pretty one ? ” said

Mrs. Lorrayne. "Oh, how I long to go to church again, to a real quiet country church."

"Yes, it is a pretty church. The rector is an old man, and leaves all the work to me; but I have an able assistant in your cousin; Mr. Lorrayne," said Simon; addressing the husband. "Miss Ethel is my right hand on most church matters." As the good curate said this, his quiet eyes lighted up with animation, and Mrs. Lorrayne at once detected his secret. She was sure he loved the girl, and she sincerely hoped that if he did so, and the girl returned his love, that she was worthy of him; but this must surely be so; for one who found in this gaunt child of nature, a refuge for her heart, must be a kindred spirit.

"And my Cousin Gerard," said Paul; "have you seen anything of him?"

"He is expected home, I believe. Yes, Gerard Lorrayne and myself are great friends. He likes to come to my rooms, and smoke a pipe, and chat about the future, and how he shall improve the property if it ever comes to him."

“Ever comes to him! Why who else can it go to? He is my uncle’s heir.”

“Your uncle can leave his estate to whom he will; it is not entailed, I am told.”

“No, it is not entailed,” said Paul, “or I should be the heir. But he would rather leave it to a stranger than to me, even if my Cousin Gerard was not living.”

“Ah,” said Simon, cutting his cheese very near the rind; “these things are hard to understand; ill-feeling and unforgiveness are tortures in the breast, and yet men hug them close. At all events,” he added; “if your cousin Gerard should ever reign at Woodleigh, he will befriend you if he can; for whenever by chance he has alluded to you, it has always been in the spirit of kindness.”

The curate’s conversation was so good-natured and so full of kindness, that Lorrayne enjoyed his visit. His artless talk—simple without being weak or foolish—was like that of an old familiar friend; and when at last his large silver watch told him, that if he meant to catch the evening train he must set out upon his road, they felt quite sorry.

The two children, Paul and Bertie, were quite at home with him, as most children were; and, with the freedom of the very young, stared at him with wonder; for there was that about the man, which made it almost impossible for those who were with him, to be so without taking special notice of him.

As to Simon, he was sorry to take his leave; for his visit had impressed him with the full belief, that those whom he had come to see were worthy of respect; and that the mistress of Woodleigh, when he should make his statement, would have her kindly interest stimulated yet further.

END OF VOL. I.





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